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AN

EXAMINATION OF THE DOCTRINE

OF

ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.

ITS CLAIMS TO DIVINE ORIGIN REFUTED,

IN A SERIES OF LECTURES

BY REV. I. D. WILLIAMSON.

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AN

EXAMINATION OF THE DOCTRINE

OF

ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.

SERMON I.

SPIRIT OF THE DOCTRINE.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." 1 John, iv: 1.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that there are, in the world, many different and even contradictory doctrines, claiming the name of Christianity. The text would seem to indicate, very plainly, that it is the duty of the Christian to examine all doctrines, for the purpose of determining whether they are, or are not, of God. It is the object of the present, and it will be the design of some subsequent lectures, to discharge this duty so far as the doctrine of endless misery is concerned. I may perhaps be allowed to say in the outset, without incurring the charge of egotism, that I was formerly a believer in that doctrine. The creed that contained it was rocked in my cradle with me, and it was most sedulously taught me "from my youth up." Against all my early impressions, and the strong prejudices

of education, I have rejected it, for reasons, that appear to me to be good and substantial; and it is my purpose to lay some of these reasons before you. I cannot hope, that all who hear me will view them in precisely the same light with myself; and though I fail to convince, yet I trust I shall, in the end, have the satisfaction of knowing that my duty has been plainly, candidly, and affectionately done.—Without further preliminary remarks, I proceed directly to the work proposed.

1. My first objection to the doctrine is, that it is plainly and most clearly, anti-Christian in its spirit.

You will bear in mind, that we are directed in our text, to "try the spirits, whether they be of God," and will therefore, I trust, have no hesitation about the propriety of the work in which we are engaged.

There is one great principle of truth, applicable alike to the physical and moral world, in view of which we should conduct this examination. It is laid down by the Savior thus: "The tree is known by its fruit, and the fountain by the waters that it sends forth." "Grapes do not grow on thorns, nor figs on thistles; neither doth the same fountain send forth waters both bitter and sweet."

Now, all systems of doctrine have some great leading features, which mark them as distinct from all others; and one of these features, is, the *spirit* which pervades them. Thus, for instance, the Mahometan religion *is* essentially contentious and war-

like, in its spirit. Its author was a "man of war," and his religion was established by the sword and the javelin. He taught his followers to fight for the faith, and promised the highest seat in heaven to those who bled and died in the battle for his defence. Its spirit, therefore, is the spirit of war.

Should you tell the Mahometan that he ought to submit even to insult and injury, with patience, and "resist not evil," he would tell you that your teachings were anti-Mahometan in spirit. The prophet himself fought, and your doctrine is opposed to the spirit of his whole life, and *all* his teachings; and by this he would decide, with as much certainty, as by the clearest testimony of the Koran.

So the Christian religion is essentially a system of "peace and good will." Its spirit is the spirit of love and kindness. Its author breathed this spirit in all his works and ways. Love is the very essence, the *life* and *soul* of the gospel; and I am prepared to reject any, and every doctrine and practice, as anti-Christian, that is opposed to this all pervading principle of love. I care not who preaches it, or by what ingenuity men may endeavor to extort it from the sacred writings; if it breathe the spirit of revenge or hatred, it is no more certain that Mahometanism and Christianity are not identical, than it is that such a doctrine or precept is no part of the gospel; for, "the same fountain doth not send forth waters both bitter and sweet." Thus, then, without resort to "doubtful interpretations, or disputations

about words," but by a test as infallible as the trial of gold by fire, you may distinguish between the metal and the alloy, and separate the gold from the dross. Let us, then, try the spirit of the doctrine of endless misery, by the spirit of the gospel, as exhibited

1. In the *teachings* of the blessed Savior.

Take the parable of the "Prodigal Son," as an illustration. This is its substance: "A certain man had two sons; and the younger said unto his father: give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. So he divided to him his living. And soon he departed, and took his journey into a far country. Away from the counsels of a father, and free from the restraints of parental authority, he indulged his lusts, and spent his substance in riotous living. There arose a mighty famine in the land, and he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and as if to complete his degradation was sent into the field to feed swine. So sore was his want, that he would have filled himself with the husks which the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.—Then he came to himself. He thought of his father and his home, and remembered that there, even the hired servants had enough and to spare. He said therefore, "I will arise and go to my *father* and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me, therefore, as one of thy hired servants."

We turn now to the father. He had wept for the loss of his son. He had remembered him and cared for him, even when he cared not for himself. He had mused of him, and prayed for him, in the silence of the night and in the waking hours of the day, and had waited with anxious solicitude for his return. And, behold, now he comes! Far in the distance appears the form of a weary traveller. The eye that was dim with age could see him "while yet he was a great way off," and detect the well remembered image of a long lost son. His limbs were just now tottering and trembling upon his staff; but he forgets that he is old. The aged frame assumes the vigor of youth. He needs no staff to support his steps; but he *runs* to meet him. He forgot the rags, and filth, and folly of his son. He forgot his guilt and iniquity; aye, he forgot every thing, but that it was his *son*, and in a transport of joy he clasped the poor wanderer in his arms, and kissed him! The first word uttered was, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring upon his finger and shoes upon his feet, and let the fatted calf be slain, and let us rejoice; for my son has returned, and I have received him safe and sound."

Here is a true delineation of the spirit of the gospel; for this parable is but an illustration of the ways of God to man. As this father felt towards his son, so God feels towards his children. I ask you to try the spirit of the doctrine of endless mis-

ery by this standard. Do you see any thing in the doctrine that resembles the spirit of this father? When earth's wandering prodigals shall be gathered before him, will he treat them as this father treated the son? Or, will he cast them out to wander hopeless and forlorn, world without end? I pray you, try the spirit whether it be of God. To me it looks not like the gospel spirit.

But there is another character introduced in the parable. The elder brother was in the field, and when he drew near the house, and heard the sound of music and dancing, he called one of the servants and asked what it meant. The answer was, "Thy brother hath come, and thy father hath killed for him the fatted calf." "And he was angry, and would not go in. Therefore went his father out and entreated him, saying, It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this, my son, was lost, and is found; he was dead, and is alive again. But he said, "Lo! these many years do I serve thee, and yet thou never gavest me so much as a kid to make merry with my friends. But no sooner does this thy son, who has devoured thy living with harlots, return, than thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." "He was angry, and would not go in." Here you see a spirit very different from that of the father. It is a spirit that would crush the sinner and drive him from his home. It is the spirit of revenge, of wrath and unforgiving cruelty. And now I pray you, try the spirit of the

doctrine of endless wo, and tell me, Is it more like that of the father? or of the elder brother? If it be like that of the elder brother, then judge ye, whether I am not justified in saying, that the doctrine is anti-Christian in spirit.

Take another illustration, found in the parable of the 'Lost Sheep.' "A certain man had an hundred sheep, and one of them went astray. He left the ninety and nine in the wilderness and went after the *one* that was lost, until he found it; and when he had found it, he laid it upon his shoulder and bare it home; and said to his neighbors, rejoice with me for I have found my sheep that was lost." I hold that the conduct of the shepherd here, is an illustration of the spirit that marks the conduct of the good and gracious master; and I hold it no perversion to say, he intended to teach here, that if in the fold above he had the ninety and nine of the human race, and one only was lost, his spirit would go out in its power, and in the arms of his love bear home the wanderer, and hold him up as the last trophy of his grace, and a subject of joy for all the inhabitants of heaven above.

It is remarkable that the shepherd did not give over the search until he had found the sheep; and when he had found it, he did not merely call and offer to show the way home; nor did he trust the sufferer to its own strength, and leave it to the mercy of the wolves. But the power of his strong arm was made bare for the rescue, and upon his broad

shoulder the poor wanderer was laid, and he bare it home, and kindred spirits rejoiced that the lost was found. Here is the spirit that pervades the gospel. It is a spirit of devotion to the interests of man, that pauses at no difficulties or dangers, that draws upon its own resources and goes out in the might of its power to seize upon a sinking world, and bear the last, lost child of error home to heaven and to God.

I ask: Do you see such a spirit in the doctrine of endless misery? Does that doctrine teach you, that God will treat sinners in the same spirit as the good shepherd the sheep? If not, then judge ye again, whether it is not anti-Christian in spirit.

But there are plainer teachings than these.— "What man among you that is a father, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? or if he ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him?" Again: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, by them of old time, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." Still once more, and I

leave this view of the subject. "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Behold, the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, will he not take care of you, O ye of little faith?"

Here is the spirit of God as set forth in the gospel. It is a spirit of unceasing care and kindness; a spirit that loves its enemies and transcends even the warm love of a parent for his children; a spirit, which feeds the fowls of the air, decks the lilies of the field, and over all the earth extends its watchful and sleepless vigilance, to deliver, to bless, and to save.

I ask you to examine the doctrine of endless misery, which crushes the sinner in hopeless wo with the remorseless cruelty of the demon; and see if you can find in it a spirit akin to that which loves even its enemies, which shines in the sun, and falls in the gentle showers, feeds even the fowls of the air, and decks the "lilies of the field." If not, then again we must be driven to the conclusion that the doctrine is anti-Christian in its spirit. Thus much for the teachings of Christ. Let us examine

2. His *examples.*

And here we shall find a still more clear, and

tangible exhibition of the spirit of love and kindness. Upon him, at his baptism, we are told, "the spirit of God descended as a dove and rested upon him." It was a harmless and peaceful emblem, indicative of the nature of the spirit by which he was guided.

The story of his life is told in the simple sentence, that "he went about doing good;" and his kind sympathies flowed out freely to all that were in want or distress. Behold him as he draws near to the city of Nain. There comes out a poor widow following the corpse of her son. He had been cut down in the bloom and strength of his life. He was the pride of her eyes, and the joy of her heart, for he was her only son, and she was a widow.—Lonely and desolate was that mourner now, and comfortless was her bleeding heart, for she was going to deposite in the cold grave the last tie that bound her to the earth. Jesus met her in the way; and he was touched with compassion, and he spake the word, and the young man arose from the dead, and he gave him again to his mother.

Look again, and see him at the grave of Lazarus. The two sisters had wept for a brother, to whom they had looked for protection and support, and who was dear to their hearts. Four days had he been in the ground. The place he had occupied was vacant; and the sisters were disconsolate. But Jesus appeared in that scene of wo, and soon their sorrow was turned to joy, their tears to smiles. He went

to the sepulchre, and the sisters with him. And when he saw the anguish of their hearts, and heard the outbreakings of their grief, his soul was melted in sympathy, and he wept with them in sorrow. And he cried with a loud voice and said, "Lazarus, come forth!" and he that was dead appeared in the habiliments of the grave, and he restored him to his sisters.

Here is the spirit of Christ. I pray you examine the matter. See him going about doing good, cleansing the lepers, casting out devils, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, legs to the lame, comfort to the afflicted, and life to the dead. Behold him in the hovels of the poor, in the chambers of the sick, and in the mansions of the dead. See him at the bier of the widow's son, touched with compassion for her woes, and exerting his power for her relief. Behold him, I pray you, weeping at the grave of Lazarus, and restoring the dead to life; and tell me, does the doctrine of infinite and unforgiving wrath, present you with a spirit akin to this? Nay. Well, then, so certainly as this is the spirit of Christ, so surely is that doctrine anti-Christian in its spirit.

It may be said that I have examined the spirit of Christ, only as manifested towards his *friends*, whereas the doctrine in question only relates to his enemies.

We turn then to his treatment of his enemies, for he himself said, "If ye love them that love you

what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" On a certain occasion the disciples found some whom they regarded as very dangerous enemies of Christ. And they came to him and desired permission to call down fire from heaven and devour them. This was *their* spirit; but how unlike the spirit of the Master. He said unto them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the son of man is not come to destroy, but to save." I ask you here, to try the spirit of the doctrine in question, and see which it most resembles, That which would call down fire from heaven? Or, that which would pity and save even an enemy? The *latter* is the Christian spirit. The *former* is anti-Christ. Again, Jesus stood upon the mount, and the great city of Jerusalem with its temple and palaces, and all its magnificence and grandeur, was spread out before him. There his bitter enemies were congregated; there he had been persecuted and maltreated; and *there* he knew were the hands that would soon seize him and bear him away to an ignominious death. How did he feel towards them, and how did he treat them? Did he hurl red bolts of vengeance at them, and curse with wrath and bitterness? Nay; but when he saw their blindness and knew that they would madly rush on to ruin, he was moved with compassion, and tears of pity fell fast and freely from his eyes, as he cried in the tenderness of his spirit: "Oh! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how oft would I have gathered you, as a hen

gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not. And now, your house is left unto you desolate, and ye shall not see me henceforth until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

A few days after, we find him in that same city, betrayed into the hands of his enemies, seized and dragged to the judgment hall, accused as a malefactor, false witnesses standing up against him, and an infuriated multitude crying out: "Crucify him! crucify him!" The crown of thorns is plaited and put upon his head. He is reviled, smitten and spat upon. But he bore it all with meekness. He reviled not again, and no word of wrath proceeded from his lips. The cross is laid upon his shoulders and he is led forth to Calvary. He is nailed to the tree, and the blood runs streaming from his hands and feet, an angry mob wag their heads and mock him, saying, "If thou art the Christ come down from the cross." But *his* was a spirit of kindness which could not be overcome of evil. And when he asked for drink, and they gave him vinegar and gall, even in the agonies of death, he lifted his voice and prayed for his murderers, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," and he bowed his head and died. O! ye who would hurt and destroy, and anathematise and curse one another; look hither and learn mercy of Jesus, and see here the spirit of the gospel of Christ.

Behold the blessed Savior standing upon the

mount and pouring out his tears over the woes of that city where his enemies were even then taking counsel to destroy him. Behold him upon the cross lifting his feeble, dying voice to heaven in prayer for God's blessing upon those who were even then taking his life; and in the name of all that is just and true, tell me, is there a spirit like this in the doctrine of endless wrath and damnation? Nay, but light and darkness are not more widely, and irreconcilably at variance. Every word and act of the life of the meek and lowly Jesus, rises up in judgment, and stamps the mark of anti-Christ upon any, and every doctrine that allows or breathes the spirit of wrath and cruelty. He who wept for the woes of humanity, and prayed even for his enemies, has breathed his own spirit into his religion, and by this standard you may try the spirits whether they be of God.

As I intimated in the beginning, so I now repeat, the religion of Jesus Christ is essentially a system of peace and good will; and it is no more certain that sweet and bitter waters do not flow from the same fountain, than that doctrines of love and hatred do not both belong to the gospel. One or the other must be abandoned, for if one be Christ, the other is anti-Christ. And hence it was that the Apostle said, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." They ought to abandon one or the other, for both could not be of God. And

What, then, is the doctrine of endless misery? Stripped of all its drapery it is no more or less than this: that a large part of the human family are doomed to suffer the most intense and indescribable torments as long as God shall exist, without the least hope, or possibility, of being benefitted by their sufferings. In some part of this beautiful universe God has prepared an awful, dismal, burning hell, and there countless myriads of human beings shall weep and groan unpitied and unrelieved, while ceaseless ages shall roll; and when ten thousand times ten thousand years shall have passed, they shall have as long to suffer as if their sufferings had but just begun. And then to think of the number of the lost, to remember that there are on this earth not less than eight hundred million of human beings, and that out of these there are not more than fifty million that can be saved upon the broadest system of partialism; and that, by consequence, there must be more than seventy thousand souls going down to hell every day; and then to think of generations that have past, and reflect upon the vast and countless multitudes that must be congregated in that huge reservoir of tears and wo; the very thought bears the lie upon its front. The degree of the punishment outrages all ideas of proportion between guilt and punishment, and the number of the victims shocks all feelings of humanity or mercy. It makes the universe a theatre of cursing and blasphemy, rather than a field for the dis-

play of the boundless perfections of a merciful and benevolent Creator.

Suppose that, up to this moment, you had never heard of the doctrine of endless misery. You had lived in a world where the blessings of a munificent Father had always surrounded you; and had known nothing of that dismal hell of which you hear so much. Suppose now I should for the first time inform you that God had prepared such a place of suffering, and that there He would torment a part of his creatures without mercy, and without end. There is not a man, woman, or child, who would not pronounce it the most unreasonable and improbable of all dreams and visions. You would go away and wonder what strange infatuation had seized upon the preacher, that he should indulge such visions. What! men to be tormented through all eternity for the sins of this short life! Man to be punished with infinite wo for his finite crimes! God who maketh the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust, built an endless hell, and He himself to become the endless tormentor of his own creatures! This beautiful world a mere nursery, where souls are made to be transplanted to a place of endless wo!! Who on earth could have thought of such an idea? Thus unsophisticated reason would view the subject when seen for the first time. And think you, that doctrine is any more reasonable, or consistent, for having been repeated so long and so often? Nay;

but a lie a thousand times told is but a lie after all. But men become so accustomed to hear it, that they cease to detect its falsehood.

So of the doctrine in question. Though of all things on earth, I hold it most improbable and unreasonable, and calculated so to strike the mind of the unprejudiced man, yet, it has been sounded in our ears until we receive it as a matter of course, and scarce think of inquiring whether it is reasonable or not.

The truth is, guilty fear and affrighted superstition, not reason, originated this sentiment; and there is truth in the language of the poet, when speaking of the heathen superstitions, he says:

"Fear made her devils, and weak hope her Gods,"
"And heaven was built on pride, and hell on spite."

But let us look at the subject in another light. Let us go back in our minds to the time, if time it may be called, when God lived alone; ere yet his spirit had walked forth upon the dark waters to rouse this universe into existence. There was no being but God in the wide extent of space; and the Almighty was about to put forth his power and create the worlds and their inhabitants, and man at the head of all on earth. Reason, plain and unprejudiced reason declares that the goodness of the Creator would lead him so to create man that his existence should prove a blessing. We can suppose no absolute necessity for creating man at all; and therefore he owes his existence to the free choice

of the Creator. The Creator, being good, could have no other but a good object in the creation of any being. The same reason declares that the wisdom of God could devise a plan, which, if carried into effect, would secure ultimate blessedness and happiness to all. And yet again, the same reason declares that the power of an Almighty arm could carry the plan into execution; and that no obstacles could possibly hinder the accomplishment of his purpose. Reason, therefore, most sternly forbids the idea that a God of wisdom, power, and goodness, should create multitudes of beings for ceaseless wo, or that even the possibility of such a calamity should enter into his government.

But I pass on, and remark, that the doctrine in question is opposed to the teachings of nature.— Great nature's volume lies ever open before us, and on its ample pages God has written lessons of truth about which there can be no mistake. The sun rises in the morning from the chambers of the east, and in all his journey through the skies he is a silent and powerful preacher of the immortal and impartial goodness of that Being who kindled his mighty fires, and bade him shed down his golden rays upon all that live, and move, and breathe the vital air. He shines upon the saint. He shines also upon the sinner far gone in the paths of iniquity. He shines upon the rich, and he gilds with equal radiance the lowly cot of the humble peasant. Over all the earth his beams are felt, and there are

none so high, so low, so rich, or so poor, that this great preacher does not proclaim to him the kindness and mercy of the government of heaven.—Look again, at the fair face of the moon, and the beauty of the stars that sparkle from their abode on high, and so peacefully shed down their radiance upon a sleeping world, and read there the glory and the goodness of the Lord; and in them a stern denial of the doctrine of endless and merciless wrath.

The lesson thus sounded from the skies is repeated from the earth with all her thousand tongues. For whom, and for what, does the gentle shower fall, and the dew distil? For whom, and to what end, does the earth bud and bring forth that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater? For whom, and what, do the limped waters gush from ten thousand fountains? For whom do the broad rivers flow, and old ocean roll her waves, swelling the eternal bass in creation's anthem of praise? Truth answers, they are for all, and intended to minister to the comfort of all the creatures that God has made. True, there are storms and tempests, and frosts and snows; but the same God who raises the stormy wind, and bids the tempest rage, has provided a shelter from its fury. He who scatters the frost, and whitens the earth with sleet and snow in winter, has given the cheerful, blazing fire, to warm our shivering limbs, and has bade the sun return from southern climes, and mount again

the northern skies to melt the snow, and cause spring in its beauty to visit the earth. And these blessings are provided for all. The gentle shower falls alike upon the fields of the saint and the sinner. The morning smiles as gaily, and the birds sing as sweetly, around the cot of the poor as the palace of the rich. Every morning's sun that lights up the earth in glory, and every falling shower that cheers and waters the earth, tells of a God of love and reproaches that man with hard and ungracious views of his Father, who dares believe that all these are the deceptive workings of a malignant spirit who conceals, behind these smiles, dark and revengeful designs of endless and remorseless cruelty.

There is another view to be taken of this part of the subject. The good providence of God has provided for the wants of all the creatures that he has made. He feeds the human race and fills their storehouses with food. He hears also the dark raven when he screams from the desolate rock, and he giveth to the beast his food in due season, for he openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. In all that vast and untold variety of creatures that God has made, there are none for whose wants he has not provided. Every part of the creation is swarming with life. And yet none are overlooked, but the meanest reptile that crawls in the dust is provided with means of sustenance and sources of enjoyment. From him who stately treads to him that lowly creeps, all are fed and

so I say, Let those sons of thunder who alternately deal out salvation and endless damnation, take to themselves the reproof of the Apostle; let them either curse or bless, nor think it is in their power to bring about an unholy union between Christ and Belial; for "what fellowship hath Christ with Belial? or, what communion can there be between the spirit of love and hatred?

It may be, as it often has been said, that it is necessary to preach the "terrors of the law," as well as the promises of the gospel. Very well; if ye are then ministers of the law, why then preach the law; but if ye be ministers of Christ, then preach Christ Jesus in all the fullness of his love, and the vast extent of his grace and truth. But it may well be doubted, if even the principles of the law, which asked an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, would, for a moment, sanction the spirit of the doctrine of endless misery. The law set bounds to the operations of a spirit of wrath. It said to the avenger of blood, "thus far shalt thou go, and no further;" and it gave no permission to pursue an offender with infinite wrath. In fact, in no instance does the law itself pursue the sinner one line beyond the grave. It uttered its thunders, and spoke its awful warnings, and pursued the sinner with the scourge; but when death came, it gave him up and asked no more. And yet this is called the ministration of wrath and condemnation! How then can the spirit of *endless* wrath be made for one moment

to harmonise with the spirit of that "new and better covenant, established upon better promises and speaking better things than the blood of Abel."—The truth is, the emblems of the spirit of God, which is more clearly portrayed in the gospel, are in the law far less terrible than is usually imagined. "My doctrine (said the great teacher of Israel) shall drop like the rain, my speech shall distil like the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."

Here then you see an emblem of that gentle and peaceful spirit, which breathes from the doctrine of God at all times, and through all generations. And although in the law, as it is called, there are instances recorded which would seem to breathe a different spirit, yet, it should be remembered, that the Jewish government was a Theocracy. God was to that people, not only a moral governor, but a civil and political king. He gave to them, not merely religious principles, but civil laws, suited to their wants and circumstances. Hence, it is a most pernicious mistake, to confound these temporal laws, which were made for an ignorant and barbarous people, and designed to remain but for a season, with the eternal principles of gospel grace and truth. As great a mistake as it would be, to proclaim a municipal law of one city as a universal law of nations. The fact seems to be overlooked by the advocates of the law, that this law was a temporal affair in its letter, designed for one nation,

and that it died when the government of that nation was abrogated, and of course we are not now under the law, but grace.

The fact, however, is, that the spirit of the *real* law of God is always the same. It is the spirit of love, for "God is love." That spirit has been developed in different degrees in different ages and dispensations. Dimly it was shadowed forth in the law of Moses, more clearly it is illustrated by the prophets of old, and gradually it was unfolded, until it blazed forth in its glory, in the person and ministry of Christ. But that spirit is at all times the same. Whether it drops like the rain, and distils like the dew, from the lips of Moses and the prophets, or falls in honied accents of mercy in the language of Jesus, makes no difference; it is the spirit of God. His spirit is love, and all opposed to that spirit is from beneath.

The old prophet in ancient days saw the emblems of the spirit of God, and its opposite. The furious wind came and roared about his head. Madly it swept on in its fury, whistling in the crevices and moaning in the caves of the bare and rugged mountain. Loud was the voice of the tempest! but the Lord was not there! And there came a consuming fire — licking up the very dust — devouring every green thing, and leaving nought but smouldering ashes behind. Burning and hot was the fire! but the Lord was not in that fire! And behold! there came an earthquake, deep rumbling in the bowels

of the earth. The lofty peaks of the perpetual hills did bow, and the firm foundations of the everlasting mountains did tremble! The solid rocks were rent asunder, and the earth heaved as the billows of the ocean lashed by the storm. Old Horeb's turrets reeled and trembled as a 'reed shaken by the wind.' Grand and awful was the earthquake! but God was not there! The earthquake passed, and the elements were hushed and silent. And lo! there came a still small voice, softly and gently stealing over the senses, like the music of holier spheres, or the far distant harps of angels in the paradise of God. It was the gentleness of heaven, the harmlessness of the peaceful dove. And God, in silent power, was in that voice!

Here is an emblem of the spirit of God, as contrasted with the spirit of man. It is the spirit of the gospel, exhibited dimly, then, but clearly afterwards in Christ. Need I ask which of these spirits the doctrine of endless misery most resembles? Nay, for it comes in the noise and din of the elements, in the fury of the tempest, in the throes and convultions of the earthquake, and the burning desolations of the fire. Its corner stone is laid upon the corrupt principle of rendering evil for evil, cursing for cursing. It presents a God in whom storms of passion rise, and its scenery is such as humanity shrinks from in dismay. It stoops to commune with the spirit of grim devils and infuriate fiends of darkness. It delights in the yells of the damned,

and in the midst of the groans of suffering millions is "well pleased to hear a deeper groan." Its voice is revenge and war; and its very language, even when it comes from the pulpit, is such as you hear in the dens of iniquity and hells of depravity on earth, when "vice swaggers in guilty riot," and bacchanalians pollute the midnight air with blasphemies against God. In Heaven's name I ask, once more, Is this the spirit of Christ? Nay; but it is anti-Christ in all its features. The gospel comes not in the wind, and the fire, and the earthquake, but in the still small voice that speaks of love and mercy. It comes down like the gentle shower upon the thirsty earth, and makes all nature revive and rejoice. I pray you then, look to Jesus. Behold in him that spirit of deathless love, that paused not at danger or difficulty in the way of doing good; that led him to embrace the cross for our sakes; that prayed for murderers there; and whenever, or wherever you find a doctrine opposed to this spirit, set it down, as a fact, that it is not true. Out with it from the Church; it has no business there. Out with it from your hearts; for it checks the genial spirit of love and kindness there. Out with it from the world; it is anti-Christ, and hath no fellowship with Jesus.

SERMON II.

THE DOCTRINE UNREASONABLE.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord."
Isaiah i: 18.

MAN alone, of all God's creatures on earth, is endued with the gift of reason. Hence the scriptures all along, consider man and address him as a reasonable being, capable of understanding truth, and appreciating duty; and capable also of distinguishing, in some good degree, between truth and falsehood. Much, very much has been said upon the subject of the office of reason in matters of religion. On the one hand, it has been decried as carnal and deceptive, and the people have been cautioned not to listen to its suggestions on the pain of the loss of their souls. On the other hand, reason has been exalted, and in its own unaided strength, held up as sufficient to guide man into all truth. With such a guide revelation has been considered unnecessary and useless, and men have been exhorted to leave the scriptures and follow the light of reason alone. The truth, I apprehend, as is frequently the case, lies between these two extremes. Reason is the ennobling gift of God, and that it should be employed in matters of religion

there can be no doubt. But its province is extremely limited, and in many things it is weak and imbecile. Hence the need of revelation to unfold things which are beyond the reach of man's unaided reason. Revelation, therefore, is above reason, but not opposed to it. It is designed to exalt and guide, not to depress or destroy reason. It is, as Locke says, to reason, what the telescope is to the eye, enlarging the sphere of its vision, and unfolding what would otherwise remain dark and unknown. But for the fact that reason is given to man, no revelation could be made to him, and hence reason must be employed, or we can know nothing of revelation. As a telescope would be of no earthly use to a man without eyes, so revelation would be of no utility to man without reason. He who would avail himself of the advantages of the telescope must use his eyes; and so he who would proffit by revelation must employ his reason. To continue the figure: As the telescope must be formed in accordance with the philosophy of light, and the phenomana exhibited to the human eye; so revelation, in order to be useful, must be founded upon, and harmonious with, the first principles of truth seen and known by human reason.

God is the fountain and giver of reason, and I hold it to be the height of absurdity to suppose, that a reasonable God would give to reasonable beings an *unreasonable* revelation. Hence, if any sentiment can be shown to be clearly opposed to right

reason, the presumption is fair that it is not a doctrine of revelation. Truth is a harmonious and uninterrupted chain, which links the whole universe together; and it may be safely laid down as an axiom that no two truths can be contradictory. Now man does see some truths by his own reason, and he knows them to be true. Hence he is authorised to reject any, and every doctrine, that contradicts these first principles.

I have proposed, in a brief series of lectures, to examine the doctrine of endless punishment, and offer my reasons for rejecting it as untrue. In a previous lecture I attempted to show that the doctrine was anti-Christian in its spirit, and gave that as my first reason for rejecting it.

II. My second is, that it is opposed to reason, and the teachings of nature and experience.

I apprehend that those who believe the doctrine of endless misery, are not sufficiently in the habit of looking upon it in its own proper and native light. A long familiarity has closed their eyes against the deformity of its features, and enabled them to look with composure, if not with complacency upon what, at first view, is revolting in the extreme. Accustomed from infancy to contemplate the sentiment, as an important item in the Christian religion, it comes to be a matter of course, and men cease to examine whether it be reasonable or merciful. It is necessary for me, therefore, to remove this vail, and state the doctrine fully and fairly.—

blessed by the wise and gracious arrangements of nature, and nature's God. Now if we see in these things the government of God at all, we see that it is benevolent and kind. We see here a rule of that government from which no exception can be found in nature. The rule is, that wherever God has given life he has coupled it with enjoyment, and made it a blessing; and why in the name of reason should man be made an exception to this rule? Or why should it be thought that the same God who has given life and enjoyment to the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and fishes of the sea, should when he came to man, his last and noblest work, depart from the rule that runs through all animated nature, and bind him over to hopeless and endless wo, or even make him run the fearful hazard of that dreadful end? It is easy to see, that on the supposition of the truth of the doctrine of endless misery, the meanest worm holds the tenure of his existence on better terms than man; and I frankly say, had it been left to my choice, I would not for worlds have accepted the gift of life, even with a possibility of its coming to such a horrid catastrophe. Thus the matter appears when viewed in connection with the reasonable doctrine of a God who rules over all. But even if we lay that sentiment out of the question, and consider all the provisions for the comfort of animated existence as the result of the laws of nature, still the supposition that man alone, of all creatures, is destined to

suffer in endless wo, is a violation of all nature's laws, and an utter denial of that uniformity which is seen in all her operations, and which lodges in every human heart the confidence that nature walks by rules that know no abatement. It would suppose that nature in some unaccountable freak had produced in man an abortion, and made him an exception to her uniform and established laws.—While in all her works she has coupled life with enjoyment, and thus made it a blessing, in man's case she has reversed her accustomed order, and in conferring on him life, has conferred a bitter curse, and made him the subject of a fate over which angels may well weep, and good men mourn in bitter anguish of spirit.

Nay; but nature through all her works cries aloud, that she has done no such thing. Her ways are uniform and equal, and all her children are blessed and made happy in her gifts. More than this: she bears the impress of her Maker's hand, and speaks out in language too plain to be mistaken, that her mighty Author is kind. Loudly does she call upon man to "look through nature up to nature's God," and while he traces in her ample pages the power and wisdom of the great I AM, to see there the footsteps of his goodness also, and to confess, that while he reigns, all will be well.

I say, then, that the doctrine of endless misery is opposed to the teachings of nature as seen in things around us; and as God wrote that volume he never

can write another that shall contradict its teachings. But there are higher developements of nature's laws, and those which are more worthy of our consideration, as they approximate more nearly to the voice of God himself.

The parent loves the child, and cannot look with composure upon its sufferings, either present or prospective. Why yearns the father's heart over the sufferings of his child? Why heaves the mother's breast with anguish when her darling is in danger? It is the voice of nature uttered at the resistless command of nature's God, and that voice low and deep, condemns the doctrine of ceaseless wo as unjust and cruel. Nay, in nine cases out of ten it prevails, and gives hope that its object is safe; for, rarely will you find a mother who believes her children are in hell. It is the testimony of nature stamping the seal of falsehood upon the creed that would damn a child.

This same voice, perhaps in fainter and more feeble tones, yet clearly, cries out against the doctrine through all the earth. Man is so made that he feels an interest in the welfare of his kindred race, and he cannot look with composure upon the sufferings of his fellow man. Let there be a fire in a city and consume ten men; and you will see a vast multitude assemble with downcast looks, and as the blackened remains are drawn from the smouldering ruins, you shall see tears falling from many an eye. It is the voice of nature speaking

out and echoing the benevolence of God. This voice is not silent, and it cannot be hushed in view of the prospective miseries presented in the doctrine in question. Go where that sentiment is preached; and you shall hear its pleadings. The minister takes his stand upon the mount that "burneth with fire and smoke," and as he describes in living words the torments of the pit of despair, an involuntary shudder will pass through the whole congregation. Some will sigh, and others weep, some will shriek outright in the agony of their spirits, and others sit in sullen gloom cursing God in their hearts, and a vast multitude will be convulsed, and rendered miserable.

What meaneth all this? I will tell you. It is the uprising of humanity, the heaving of nature, whose laws have been outraged and violated, and whose voice cannot be hushed by the whirlwind of fanaticism, and the noise of angry superstition. In one case, she sighs and weeps like a grieved infant; in another, she utters her protest in the shudder of horror; in another, she rouses herself like a lion from her lair, when robbed of her whelps, and is ready to tear and rend the cause of offence; and in all, the testimony is clear that nature, ever true to herself, is outraged by the unnatural dogma.—When we read of the cruelty of a Nero and Caligula, nature rises up and condemns the procedure, and we shudder. And so when we hear of endless tortures, and for one moment realize what it means,

our souls revolt at the idea, and our very natures stamp it with dishonor and falsehood.

It is, also, worthy of remark that those feelings which thus revolt against the doctrine, are not those which are called corruptions of human nature, but they are the kindest, best and holiest feelings, such as God commands us to exercise, and to whose guidance, we are required to submit ourselves at all times. Hence then, I say, that the doctrine of endless misery is opposed to the most clear and emphatic teachings of nature, and of course is untrue, for the God who gave nature all her laws never gave a revelation to contradict those laws.

I remark, once more, that this doctrine is opposed to the lessons of experience, as far as experience goes. It is an old and trite maxim that experience is the best school master. The lessons of this great teacher are sometimes dearly bought, but they are nevertheless valuable. Now I say, that in the experience of six thousand years the world has seen no one fact to justify the principle of endless wo. If we begin with ourselves we shall find abundant evidence that God has been our friend, in time past, and reason for believing that he will be in all time to come. And suppose we ask others what is the result of their experience in this matter; whether they have not found, on the whole, that there is something in this world to live for? The answer would be, O, yes. Each individual will say, God has blessed me far beyond what I could

claim or even expect. Well, what has God ever done to you, from which you can reasonably infer that he intends to torment you in the future world? Nothing; absolutely nothing. But on the contrary, he has smiled upon you in all your ways, and poured down his blessings continually upon your unworthy head; from all which the inference is plain, that he is your friend, and will do you good and not evil. Well, did you ever see any one that God had not blessed? Nay, for he maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust. Over all the earth he has diffused abroad his blessings, and man every where feeds upon his bounty and is happy. Why else is it that all men love to live, and cling with such tenacity to life, if that life be not a blessing? The truth is, in all the grades and conditions of human life, there is a broad and deep stream of happiness flowing to one and all. That stream flows through the depths of nature's wilds, and lights up the smile of joy upon the face of the red man, as he pursues his game with quiver and bow, or rests in his humble wigwam. It reaches the sable African on the burning sands, and his swarthy brow is radiant with joy as he dances to the music of a reed under the spreading palm. It reaches the pale children of the north, and its influence sits upon the countenance of the Laplander, as he wraps himself in his furs, and drives with arrowy speed over frosts and snows, with his deer

and his sledge. These all are well pleased to live, and do testify every day that experience has lodged in their hearts the great truth that life is a blessed boon from which they cannot part without a pang. True, there are trials and afflictions through which all must pass: there are pages in the book of human experience wet with tears. But these are the exceptions to the general rule, and we mark and remember them as the extraordinary events of life, while we are apt to forget our joys, for the same reason that we forget a thousand pleasant days, and register in the book of remembrance a single storm. The one is common, the other uncommon; the one is the rule, the other only the exception. More brightly does the page of our joy shine, from the fact that it is occasionally contrasted with a shade of sorrow.

But the subject ends not here. We may go back to the beginning of the world, when the new creation was laid out in its freshness and beauty, and God pronounced it all very good; and you may trace the history of man from that to the present moment, and you can lay your hand upon no fact, that will justify the anticipation of endless wrath from God. Six thousand years has the earth rolled upon its axis, and during all that time generation has been treading close upon the heel of generation, and the earth has been peopled more than twice ten thousand times; and of each and every one of this vast multitude, it may be said in truth, that God

has blessed him, and proved that he was his friend. Here then you have your own experience, the experience of your fellow creatures, beginning at the present moment and running back through six thousand years, and it all rises up before you and condemns as opposed to all its teaching, the doctrine that the same God who has stood by us and so faithfully blessed us in time past, will in the future reverse the whole order of his government, and curse with endless wrath and cruelty.

What can we reason but from what we know? I confess I know of no better, or safer way of judging the future than by the past. And judging by that rule, I would most gladly be informed, what there has been in God's dealings with man for six thousand years, to justify those fears of his endless ire, with which his professed messengers so much torment the world?

For me, I say, before I can believe that sentiment, I must disregard all laws of cause and effect, forget that there is such a thing as proportion between crime and punishment, and confound all distinctions between reason and superstitious fear. I must close my eyes against all the beauties of creation, and see in the sun and moon, and stars above, and in the beauteous earth below, no testimony of a Maker's goodness, but the footsteps of infinite and unforgiving hatred. Nay, more; I must shut out from my vision the whole history of the past; I must forget that I have ever received a blessing

from God, and cease to feel that one obligation of gratitude binds me to him as a benefactor. Then and not till then, shall I be prepared to believe that the God of all the earth will suffer myriads of his creatures to lie weltering in flames of torment world without end. But so long as I can look upward, and see the bright sun in the firmament by day, and the moon and stars by night; so long as I can look out upon this beautiful world and see a Father's goodness walking in love and kindness; and so long as I can look upon a world of intelligences smiling and happy around me, and upon the history of six thousand years, all crying aloud that God is good; *so long* will I cling to the bright hope, that my Father will deliver from every sorrow; for that his grace is sufficient for any and every emergency; and *so long* will I hold the doctrine of endless torments to be, what it is pronounced by the united testimony of reason, nature, and experience, a figment of the vain imagination, destined like some fitful meteor to alarm the world for a time, and then vanish away, and

> "Like the baseless fabric of a vision,
> Leave not a wreck behind."

SERMON III.

THE DOCTRINE OPPOSED TO GOD.

"God is love." 1 John iv. 8.

The character of God is the foundation of all that is true in theory, and correct in practice. He is the governor of the universe and the author of all truth. Hence his government will shadow forth his character, and his truth will harmonize with his nature, from which it flows, as a stream from the fountain. Hence again, his nature is a perfect standard of truth, and nothing can be true that stands opposed to his character. In two previous lectures I have examined the doctrine of endless misery, and attempted to show that it is anti-Christian in spirit, and opposed to reason, nature and experience, and these were offered as reasons why that doctrine ought to be rejected. I offer at this time as an additional reason for its rejection,

3. It is opposed to the nature and character of God.

The nature of God is set forth in the brief language of the text. "God is love;" HE is not merely lovely, but he is *love* itself. Love is the very essence of his nature, and my position is, that

the doctrine in question is diametrically and forever, hopelessly, and utterly irreconcilable with the spirit of love, which is the nature of God. It is granted, that the most tender love may acquiesce in the infliction of pain and suffering. Thus, the love of a father may induce him to chastise his child; but it will be for the good of that child, and the same love that prompts the chastisement of the child at first, will sternly forbid the infliction of one stripe more than is necessary to secure the good of the child. So the love of God seeks the good of its objects, and is perfectly consistent with any, and all punishments which are intended for the good of those on whom they are inflicted. But beyond that it cannot go one line. Now the fact that punishment is held to be endless in *duration*, saying nothing of its *degree*, absolutely precludes the possibility of its being designed for, or eventuating in, any good to its subjects. Such punishment therefore, is utterly opposed to the spirit of love. It is not only improbable, but in the very nature of the case, absolutely impossible, that God should inflict an endless duration of punishment upon any being whom he loves. Love cannot work ill to any of its objects, and as the whole workings of the doctrine of endless misery are "evil, and only evil, and that continually," so it is utterly opposed to all love for its subjects. The question may therefore be properly agitated whether God does in reality love all the human family?

That he *hates* none of them is evident, for hatred cannot dwell in a being whose nature is love. In such a case, God would be divided against himself, and a house divided against itself cannot stand. We may then safely assume it as an unquestionable truth, that God does not *hate* any being that he has made. But more than this, it is evident from his nature that he loves all. He is omnipresent, filling the immensity of space. In every part of the earth, its mountains and valleys, its plains and hills, its oceans and rivers, and its lonely wilds and caves, God is present; and where God is there is love, for "God is love." It is therefore as impossible that God should cease to be love, to any being, as that he should cease to be present with that being. Can man fly from the presence of his Maker? Nay. Saith the Psalmist, "If I ascend into heaven thou art there. If I make my bed in hell thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, even there shall thy hand hold me and thy right hand lead me." So then, God is present everywhere, and as "God is love," therefore, *love* is present every where, and with all beings. From love no real evil can flow; and as endless misery is an infinite evil, therefore it is opposed to love, opposed to God, and cannot be true.

Thus much of the nature of God; and I now come to speak of his character and attributes. Strictly speaking the attributes of God are but dif-

ferent manifestations of his nature. We might as well say, Love is powerful, wise, good, merciful, just and true, as to say that these attributes belong to God; for "God is love," and these are his attributes. But, as custom, and usual modes of speech have sanctioned the use of the terms "Attributes of God," I will employ that phrase. Although the fact that the doctrine of endless misery is opposed to love, the very nature of God, is clear proof that it is opposed to all his attributes, yet, perhaps the argument will be more clearly appreciated, if we carry it out in detail, by an examination of the acknowledged attributes of Deity.

I take then what may be called the cardinal attributes, and attempt to show, that the doctrine in question is opposed to them, one and all. These are, Power, Wisdom, and Goodness.

Goodness would seek the best good of all; Wisdom would devise a plan by which that Goodness would carry out its wishes; and Power would execute that plan. The result of the combined action of these attributes is evidently the highest possible good of all. Endless misery would be the greatest possible evil to a large part, and is therefore opposed to these attributes of God.

If there are any who suffer endless misery, I take it that it will be for one of two reasons, "either because God *could* not, or *would* not prevent it. Besides these I can think of no reason for such suffering. Now, if we say that he *would* not pre-

vent it, we limit his love and impeach his goodness, by making him voluntarily prefer evil to good, suffering to happiness, for his creatures. On the other hand, if we say that he *could* not prevent the evil, then we impeach his wisdom or power; his wisdom, by supposing him incapable of devising the means of securing the desired object; his power, in supposing him unable to carry out the plan when formed. So that, in either case, the doctrine is most clearly and unquestionably opposed to the attributes of God.

I am aware that there are several ways by which men attempt to evade the force of this reasoning; and some of these I may perhaps with propriety bring before you. One method is, by denying that the best possible good of the universe requires the eternal salvation of the whole human race. It is said that there are innumerable worlds and systems of worlds where God reigns, and that the greatest good of the whole system requires that an example should be made of some, in which the terrible consequences of rebellion against God should be so clearly seen as to deter others from violating his holy laws. God therefore chooses the greatest possible good of the universe, and saves all that can be saved in the nature of things. Now if these premises were true, it would indeed relieve the Divine Goodness of any imputation, in the last act of the drama; for even infinite goodness cannot be expected to perform impossibilities.

But I would be glad to know by whom and for what purpose this almighty "*nature of things*" was made, which so effectually circumscribes the operations of Divine Goodness. If God gave things their nature, on purpose that they should so circumscribe the operations of his benevolence, then the difficulty remains where it was, and his goodness is still impeached, in the fact that he intended or foresaw the evil and did not prevent it. But if it be said, that "in the nature of things" God could not prevent it, although his goodness would have prompted him so to do, still we ask, whence came this nature of things? Did it exist fortuitously and independent of God? And did he find in it a power which was an overmatch for his own wisdom, and the strength of his arm? If so, you indeed remove the objection from his goodness; but you lay it down at the door of his wisdom or power. Surely infinite wisdom and an almighty arm, seeking the good of all, ought not to be defeated in its plans or works by a theological or philosophical shadow, called "the nature of things." I go back to the time when there were no things, with or without a nature, but God. And I take it that when God made all things he gave them a nature to please himself, and if afterwards he found this nature opposed to the operations of his benevolence, the fault is with his wisdom, for he should have known better than to give things such a nature.

Another mode of avoiding the difficulty is, by contending that God is infinitely good, even to those who suffer endless misery. Rev. Asa Shinn, in a recent and popular work, enlarges upon the subject after the following manner. I quote from memory, and give the substance, not the precise words of the argument.

"Infinite goodness does not necessarily involve the idea that all must be alike happy; but only that each individual shall be as happy as he can be made, in view of his nature and condition. Now happiness is connected with holiness, and misery with sin. The holy being cannot be miserable, on the one hand, and on the other, the sinful being cannot be happy. Now here is a large company of incorrigible sinners; God cannot make them happy as such. To place them in heaven would be of no use, for they would be miserable there. He therefore sends them to hell, and even there makes them no more miserable than they are sinful. He therefore does all that can be done for them, and this is all that even infinite goodness is required to do."

Such is the substance of the argument, and I perceive that it is becoming somewhat popular. Specious as it may appear, it is more plausible than solid. I am surprised that so acute a reasoner as this author shows himself to be, in many parts of his work, should have overlooked the important fact, that while he so earnestly labored to relieve

the infinite goodness of God from the slightest imputation, he was aiming a shaft directly at his wisdom and power.

Granted if you please, for it is true, that the sinner cannot be happy *as a sinner*, and that the holy in heart cannot be miserable; and then we will examine the argument. Here is a vast company of sinners, and our author affirms that God cannot make them happy as such. Granted, but did it never occur to him to ask, whether God might not change the character of these sinners, and make them righteous? It strikes me that the reformation of these sinners would be no new thing under the sun. I think I have heard of a power that could cleanse from all iniquity, and if I mistake not, heaven itself is peopled with those who were once sinners even as these. And yet, here was the company of sinners, and as such they could not be happy. The question was, what should infinite goodness do with them? The idea that they might possibly be reformed never seemed to enter his mind. He appears rather to admit, that the efforts of God, in all his wisdom and power, for their reformation, had been baffled. The poor creatures had proved too much for him, and as he could not convert them he must needs make a virtue of necessity, let them go to hell, and there make them as comfortable as he could, all things considered. Now I grant that this makes God good, perfectly so, if you please; but it is a sorry compliment to

his wisdom and power. If God could not convert them, very well; it was kind in him to do the next best thing. But if he *would not* convert them, having the power to do so, then the difficulty lies precisely where it did before, with his goodness.

But here comes another mode of evading the argument. This objector cautions us to remember that man is a "free agent." Without this he could have been neither virtuous or vicious. To violate this agency would be to make man a machine; and this God cannot do. In the exercise of this agency man ruins himself; and it is no imputation upon God's goodness to say that man rushes to destruction in the face of all his calls to the contrary; and falls under a doom which, however deplorable, is of his own procuring.

All this may be very clear to some minds. But to me I confess it is confusion worse confounded; and far enough from removing one fraction of the difficulty. How came man by that ungovernable and uncontrolable agency, upon which as a scape goat you would lay all the blame of endless perdition? Did it exist independently of God, and successfully baffle all his efforts to secure the good of his creatures? If so, God may be very good, but he is a weak and inefficient being, always at the control of an almighty agency.

But no, man has no other agency than what God gave him. If he could not make a free agent without running the fearful hazard of the endless ruin

of those on whom he conferred it, why then a kind and good being would have made a machine, or anything else, rather than a free agent. If you say, God was under the necessity of creating man a free agent, or not creating him at all; why, then, he might have been kind in creating him, for out of two evils we have a right to presume that he chose the least. But instead of being a God, of all power and wisdom, he was the mere sport of an antecedent necessity, and had no attribute of an intelligent being, except the mere liberty of choósing between two courses, one or the other of which was forced upon him by that irresistible necessity.

The truth is, God was free to give or withhold this agency, and no good being would jeopard the immortal interests of myriads of intelligent beings for the sake of a theological abstraction like this. If he gave an agency which he could not control, the fault was with his wisdom or power. But if he *can* control that agency and make it a blessing to all, but *will not*, then we come back again to the old difficulty from which we started, and impeach the infinity of his goodness. Turn which way you will, mystify the matter as you may, and still there is no evading the force of the truth, that the doctrine of endless misery, in any and all its forms and phases, and with whatever adjuncts it may be coupled, is utterly and forever opposed to the attributes of God as a being of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness.

But I have not yet done; for no sooner have we established the truth of the utter repugnancy between the doctrine and the attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness, and driven the objector from every hiding place on that score, than another ground is taken. It may indeed be, that we cannot see precisely how this doctrine harmonizes with these attributes of God; but ah! you forget that God is *just* as well as good; and though his mercy may plead for sinners, yet stern *justice* must have its claims; and hell with all its horrors will exalt and glorify God's justice as clearly as heaven his mercy and grace.

I remark, here in the outset, that I have but a poor opinion of any system of religion, that must needs support itself by "setting at odds heaven's jarring attributes," and making God a being divided against himself. I have before shown, that God's nature is love, and that all his attributes are but modes of manifestation, or operation of this great principle; and hence the perfect harmony of all his attributes. Stern justice, inflexible and relentless as it is usually thought to be, is but the justice of a God of love; and in its most rigid application, it never did, and never *can* inflict a single stripe more than infinite love and tender mercy shall approve.

Justice can offer no apology for cruelty, or for one line of departure from the most perfect goodness. The doctrine in question, therefore, if

opposed to goodness, is precisely as much opposed to justice.

But since compelled, we will examine a little further. Justice I take to be that principle which renders to every being that which is justly his right. One of the most clearly defined and sacred principles of justice I understand to be, that punishment shall in all cases be measured by the guilt of the offender. Justice would not punish a child, for stealing a toy, with the same severity that it would a man for highway robbery; for this would disregard the rule of just proportion between crime and its punishment. Now man is finite, limited in all his powers and capacities. His virtues are acknowledged to be, and his vices by the same rule are finite, and measured in degree by his own imperfect knowledge of good and ill. The doctrine of endless misery, which would inflict infinite wo upon a finite worm for the sins of a day, confounds all distinctions between crimes, disregards all ideas of proportion between crime and its punishment, and is therefore opposed to the very first principles of justice. So sure as there is a just God in the universe, so certainly will his justice forbid the idea of punishing any being with endless and unmitigated suffering.

So plainly is such a punishment at war with all ideas of justice, that of late even the abettors of the doctrine of endless misery, such as Dr. Beecher, Dr. Ely, and even the "Evangelist," the lead-

ing orthodox paper of New York, have scouted the idea, that man is to be punished eternally, in the future world, for the sins of this life. That would be rank injustice they confess. But man, it is said, will continue to sin forever, and without end, and as long as he continues to sin, he will be punished; and hence, as Dr. Beecher has it, "eternal punishment will tread upon the heels of eternal transgression."

So then, because a man sins in this world and suffers for it, he must of necessity be sentenced to hell, there to sin say a hundred years, and because he sins during that hundred years, he must atone for it by sinning another hundred, and so on, *ad infinitum*. And this is justice. As if it were not enough that man had sinned all the days of his life in this world; so he must needs be apprenticed to the Devil, and taught to sin with a still higher hand in the future world; and that in the way to satisfy the demands of that same justice, whose laws were outraged by the sins of the present! Truly such views as these have little fellowship with any known and acknowledged principles of justice.

But again; justice is, as we said, that principle of right which gives to every being that which is properly his own. It should be remembered, that God has some just claims upon the children of men. He has a right to the love and obedience of all his creatures. Hence he says, "My son, give

me thy heart." This is his right, and in strict justice he claims and demands it as his own. It is clear, therefore, that the justice of God requires the holiness and consequent happiness of all intelligences, and justice will never be done fully until the whole creation shall be brought to bow in meek submission before the throne of the Eternal, and render unto him that which is most justly his, all honor and glory, thanksgiving and adoration. And yet this very justice is arrayed by men against the enforcement of heaven's claims, and alledged as proof that the Devil will succeed in robbing heaven of half of its inhabitants, the Savior of his victory, and God of his children. Yea, even God's justice is offered as proof, that millions of the human family will resist the just claims of heaven, withhold from God what is rightfully his own, and forever blaspheme his name, and trample upon every principle of justice in the universe. Is there any justice in eternal rebellion against God? None at all. Then such a doctrine is evidently opposed to the attribute of justice.

The misfortune is, that men in this day seem to overlook every thing but what may be called penal justice. Thus a man sins, and God punishes him, and in that simple fact men see the justice of God. Now I confess I see no justice in that simple fact alone. The veriest tyrant that ever lived would have punished the transgressor; and the history of the world will bear witness, that those ruthless

tyrants who have most outrageously violated all justice and right, have been most prompt to punish. It is not, therefore, the simple and isolated fact that God punishes the sinner, in which we are to behold his justice. Cruelty, revenge, or tyranny would do the same. But the foundations of justice lie further back than this. When a man sins, he commits an act of injustice. He withholds from God that which is his due, obedience. Why does God punish him? Not simply retrospectively, because he has sinned; for revenge or cruelty would do that; but prospectively, to enforce the claims of justice, and induce the sinner to render unto God what he has a right to claim. I therefore see the justice of God, not so much in the simple fact that he punishes man for disobedience, as in the antecedent fact, that his claim upon man for obedience is just and right; and that his punishments are wisely and graciously modified, and designed to enforce that righteous claim.

But it is easy to see that so soon as punishment loses sight of that claim, or ceases to be designed to enforce the obligation of obedience, that moment it loses the character of justice, and becomes revengeful, vindictive, or cruel. Now the doctrine of endless misery closes its eyes entirely upon the fact, that justice requires all men to obey God, which is the very foundation of all justice; for if man was not bound to obey, God would have no right to punish; and it makes punishment, instead

of an agent for procuring justice, the very means of defeating all its claims. It may, indeed, say, "thou shalt render obedience to God," but in an awkward attempt to enforce obedience to that command, it puts it out of the power of its subject ever to obey God, or do justice, and thus it effectually defeats the prime object of all punishment, and violates that sacred principle of justice on which the very right to punish is founded.

The right of a parent, and the only right he has to punish a child, is founded upon the fact, that the parent has a just claim upon the obedience. Without that, all would be usurpation and tyranny. The stranger might chastise your children, the usurper might punish the people, but it would not be justice; for I repeat once more, "all right to punish is founded upon the antecedent and just obligation of obedience." The moment punishment loses sight of that fact, it ceases to be founded in justice. The parent who so punishes his child as to prevent him from rendering obedience; the legislator who so punishes a criminal as to prevent him from rendering just obedience to the State, subverts the very foundations of all justice. And so I say, the doctrine that overlooks the great truth that man owes obedience to God, and so punishes him as to preclude the possibility of his ever fulfilling that obligation, is utterly and forever at war with justice, and engaged in a desperate struggle to defeat her claims. Such is the doctrine of endless misery.

It robs God of his glory, and of his children; it declares that man shall never render obedience to the just and righteous claims of HIGH HEAVEN; its authority is usurpation; its punishments, revenge and wrath: and it crimsons the altar, and pollutes the temple of justice with the blood of victims slain by the sword of oppression and cruelty.

Conscious, therefore, that I stand upon a rock which cannot be moved, and that I speak in accordance with those eternal principles of right, which are "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," I pronounce the doctrine of endless wo, not merely unjust, but vindictive and cruel.

That the doctrine in question is opposed to the attribute of mercy, is made clearly manifest; for it has no mercy to exercise even upon those that call for it through eternity, with bitter groans and tears. Whether, therefore, we consider God's nature as one, and that one, the spirit of love; or, whether we contemplate it in the various modifications called attributes, it is plain that the doctrine we have been considering, has no fellowship with God, and, of course, it cannot be true.

There is one more idea, and I shall relieve you from this attention. Men are said, in the Scriptures, to become partakers of the divine nature, through faith in the promises of the Gospel. It need scarcely be repeated, that the nature of God

is love, and that we become partakers of the divine nature just in proportion as we imbibe the spirit of love. Hence, the Apostle says: "He that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him, for God is love." Now the idea to which I invite your attention, is this: Just in proportion as men become partakers of the divine nature, do they become opposed to the spirit of the doctrine in question. The hard-hearted, the vindictive, the revengeful, and the cruel, delight to dwell upon the torments of hell. A bloody Nero may be supposed to be pleased with it; for he that danced by the light of burning Rome, might feel a communion of spirit with a sentiment that lights up the future with the flames of endless torture, and delights in the miseries of the damned. But the kind in heart—those pure spirits who are noted for their benevolence, and who have in reality hearts to feel for the sufferings of their fellow creatures: these shrink away from the thought, and weep over the horrors of hell. True, their education and prejudices may be such that they feel bound to believe the sentiment, and though it may find a place in their creeds, and heads, yet it is most evident that it finds no congenial spirit in their hearts. The thought of it gives them pain, and as often as they pray, they cry mightily to God to save them from it, and with them, the whole world. They are made partakers in some measure of the divine nature, and that nature rises up in rebellion against

the doctrine in question; for with it, it has no sympathy.

I pray you, then, friends, if you will not listen to my arguments, hear the voice of the Divinity that stirreth within your inmost souls, that God himself hath no fellowship with the spirit of wrath in any of its forms.

SERMON IV.

THE DOCTRINE UNSCRIPTURAL.

"To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."
Isaiah viii: 20.

In ancient times, there were many who deceived the people with professions of having knowledge of the future. To these deceivers, the people frequently betook themselves in times of trouble, and sought, by these means, to obtain a knowledge of the issue of their calamities. The consequences were, of course, deception and ultimate disappointment.

To prevent such practices, and afford a means of detecting the impostor, God commanded Isaiah to direct the attention of the people to the "Law and the Testimony," and make that the standard of truth.

"When they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards, that peep, and mutter. * * To the Law and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Here was the great standard of truth, the true light of heaven, and if the words of the diviners and sorcerers did not harmonize with this, then, evi-

dently, they were not in the light: and their counsels were to be rejected.

The use I have to make of this passage, is natural and easy. In a few lectures, I have invited your attention to the question of the future, and final issue of the divine government, in special reference to that doctrine which denounces endless and intolerable suffering upon a large portion of the human family. I have attempted to show that said doctrine is essentially anti-Christian in its spirit; in theory, opposed to the teachings of reason, nature and experience, and to all the acknowledged attributes of God; and I am now to show that it is opposed to Scripture. This is the ultimate appeal: the great tribunal whose decisions must settle the question. "To the Law and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

I begin, then, with the position, that this doctrine is not taught in the Old Testament Scriptures. These may, in general, be denominated the Law, or the Legal Dispensation, by way of distinction, and I undertake to show, that the doctrine of endless punishment is not taught in these writings. But, on the contrary, this doctrine is opposed to the facts recorded, and the principles taught there.

When our first parents transgressed the divine command, it is no more than reasonable to suppose that God made known to them the worst of their case, and informed them of the full extent of the

evil to which they had exposed themselves. But, every one who has read the Bible, must be aware, that he gave them no hint or intimation that they had rendered themselves obnoxious to the "pains of hell forever," or even to any calamity beyond this mode of existence. The serpent was cursed; the woman was informed that her sorrows should be multiplied; and the man, that the earth should bring forth thorns and thistles, and that he should eat his bread in the sweat of his face, until he returned to the dust from which he was taken. And there ends the malediction. Not a word or a hint is dropped from which even a plausible inference can be drawn, that they had exposed themselves to the danger of unutterable torments in another world.

The same is true in the case of Cain, who murdered his brother. The voice of blood cried in the ear of heaven for vengeance. The murderer, with reeking hands, was at the bar of God, and the sentence from the justice of the Eternal was, "Now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." And there is the end of the curse, even upon the guilty murderer. No word is uttered from which it would appear that even Cain was to be tormented for his sin in another world.

So, when that Law which was given in the midst of the lightnings of Mount Sinai, and all the grand and terrific displays of divine power that made Israel quake, and Moses himself tremble; *even the Dialogue itself* is guarded by no such penalty as endless suffering in another world. Death was the ultimatum of its woes. Nor was the avenger of blood commissioned to pursue the victim one line beyond the grave. Now I do maintain that, if the doctrine of endless misery had entered into the arrangements of the divine government, here is the very place that we should look for its first and clearest revelation. But positively, neither in the Garden, where man first sinned, nor on the plain, where the first murderer received his sentence; nor yet on Sinai, that trembled in the storm, was that sentiment proclaimed or even whispered from above. Neither is it revealed at all in the subsequent writings of the Old Testament; nor was known as a revelation from God, for full four thousand years from Adam. This is not a mere assertion of mine, but a well settled fact in theology, conceded by many of the most learned and eminent defenders of the doctrine. Indeed, many of the commentators doubt, and some affirm, that the doctrine of future life is not taught at all in the Old Testament. However this may be, it is tolerably well agreed that the doctrine of endless hell torments is not taught in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Dr. Campbell says, "it is plain that

in the Old Testament the most profound silence is observed in regard to the state of the dead; their joys or sorrows; their happiness or misery. It is represented to us rather by negative qualities than by positive; by its silence, its darkness, and its being inaccessible, except by preternatural means, to the living: and their ignorance of it." I need not multiply words, for it will not be disputed, by any man at all acquainted with the subject, that there is a general, if not a profound silence, in regard to this doctrine in the Old Testament Scriptures; and that it is not there clearly and explicitly taught. But I go further, and affirm, that these writings are not merely silent upon the subject, but the doctrine in question is opposed to their teachings. This is evidently true, not only from the circumstances of the case, and the general scope of those Scriptures, but from their clear and explicit testimony.

There is one remarkable fact, that I cannot help thinking has a very important bearing upon the question before us. The circumstance to which I allude is, that the doctrine of future torment in hell, modified in one form and another, is taught in all other systems of ancient date, a knowledge of which has come down to the present day. The Magians, the Greeks and Romans, the worshippers of the Sun, and the devotees of Moloch and Baalim, all had their doctrine of future wo, and their temples were dark with smoke, and their altars red

with the blood of victims offered and slain to avert the evil. For ages and ages, the pleasures of the Elysian fields, and the miseries of the deep Tartarean gulf, and the gloomy darkness of Erebus, were the favorite themes of the Poets and Philosophers; and they wrought powerfully upon the fears of the people by these means.

Now, is it not a little astonishing that this doctrine should stand out prominently on all the systems of human inventions, during a period of four thousand years, and yet no trace of it be found in the Old Testament, containing a record of all the revelations God was pleased to make during that period? The writings of the Old Testament all along allude to the systems of the heathens as a mass of lies and falsehood. They caution the faithful to go not after them, and denounce sore judgments upon those who turned from God's Testimonies to follow the vain visions of an idolatrous and false world. From all which, I take it, the distinction between the teachings of the Scriptures and the visions of the heathen, was broad and deep, so that it could not be reconciled. But if the heathen spake in accordance with the oracles of truth concerning the ultimate destiny of the world, why not give them credit for at least that much of truth?

That the God of all grace and comfort should conduct the affairs of his government to no better end than the thousand "changeful, partial, passion-

ate and unjust" gods of the heathen, and that a revelation from him should speak in harmony with the pipings and mutterings of the wild and fearful superstitions of idolators, is a supposition that I cannot allow for a moment.

When Israel went after the ways of the heathen, and brought their abominations into the house of God, building up the high places of Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom: causing their sons and daughters to pass through the fire to Moloch, it was denounced as a pollution of that house, and loudly did the prophet denounce the judgments of God upon the people for their guilty sin.

Now, I can but remark, that the term gehenna, rendered hell in the New Testament, and which is the only word now held to designate a place of endlesss torment, is the same with the Ge Hinnom, or valley of Hinnom, in the Old, where the Jews, like the heathen, caused their children to pass through the fire to Moloch. If God's word gave no countenance to the practice of burning children in the literal flames of the Tophet that was, I appeal to you if there is any ground for the belief that it can harmonize with that new and spiritual edition of these abominations which removes the valley of Hinnom to the future world, and there tortures myriads of souls, in endless fires? To me it appears, that if the Scriptures of the Old Testament would not allow the fires that burned in the valley of Hinnom of old, still more emphati-

cally do they forbid the idea of these quenchless flames that men have kindled in the future, to torment the world.

But I proceed further: All the law and the prophets are summed up by the Savior in these words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" Here, then, you see the whole spirit of the law. It calls on man to love God and his neighbor, and seeks to secure that end. It is an important question, whether the doctrine of endless misery can harmonize with such a law! Was there ever a man brought to love God with the whole heart, from a belief, that multitudes should be tormented by him without mercy and without end? Did any man ever love his neighbor more for the belief that his neighbor was doomed to the companionship of demons forever, or even in danger of such an end? I judge not. But on the contrary, that doctrine robes the the great Divinity in garments that are not lovely, but terrible: and it makes man cease to look upon his neighbor as his brother; thus hindering, rather than promoting, the love of God and man. Hence, it is opposed to the law which requires that love.

But more than this: The doctrine forbids the possibility, that the law should be fulfilled. It places numbers of the human family in a place of

wretchedness, beyond all hope of deliverance. Will they love God and one another there? Nay, but will, from the very excess of their torments, curse God, blaspheme his name, and hate one another through all eternity. And is this according to law? Or can it by any ingenuity be made to harmónize with that law which requires love to God, and good will to man? I confess I cannot see the least possible harmony between the two. The one asks love and happiness, and the other gives hatred and wo.

Granted, if you please, that the law threatens to punish the sinner for disobedience; for so it does, whether it be granted or not. But I recognize, in the very fact, that the law thus threatens, its opposition to all disobedience, and its determination to enforce its claims. Say, if you will, that the threatened punishments are severe and lasting, and still it is true that they are designed to enforce obedience; unless, indeed, they originate in sheer revenge. But the moment you make the punishment so lasting or severe as to prevent any soul upon whom the law has claims, from rendering obedience, that moment you array the penalty against the law, and make it defeat all its objects.

Now, we have before seen, that the doctrine of endless misery prevents the fulfillment of the law, forbids that many, very many of its subjects shall ever love God or their fellows; and therefore, I

assert that it is diametrically opposed to the law of God.

But there are in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, many clear and explicit testimonies, that cannot, in my judgment, be made to harmonize with the doctrine in question. Such are the following: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, surely in blessing I will bless, and multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gates of his enemies; and in thee, and thy seed, shall all nations be blessed."

"I have sworn by myself; the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return: that unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess; surely shall say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." If these passages do not teach the universal reign of righteousness, and the diffusion of blessedness through all creation, I cannot well imagine language that would set forth such a sentiment. How they can be made to harmonize with the doctrine of endless rebellion and wo, I cannot by any effort imagine. True, I have seen some efforts of the kind, but to me they have been signal failures. It is unnecessary to multiply quotations; for a few words to the point, are as good as a thousand; and if the former fail to convince, more would be useless. I will,

therefore, add but one more, which, to my mind, is clear upon the point. It is found in Lamentations iii: 31, 2, 3; and reads thus: "For the Lord will not cast off forever; but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his tender mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

I know not but there are some who may see a most perfect harmony between the assertion that the Lord will not cast off forever, but that he will have compassion, and the doctrine which affirms that he will cast off forever, and have no mercy. But for me, I confess I can see nothing but the most plain and palpable of all contradictions. The one asserting that God will do, what the other unequivocally declares he will not do.

I pass on, and will attempt to show that the doctrine is opposed to the testimony of Jesus, and his inspired apostles, as recorded in the Scriptures of the New Testament.

This position might, naturally enough, be deduced from what we have already said. The law was given in the midst of the thunders of Mount Sinai, and is called the ministration of death, on account of its greater sternness and severity. If this law cannot countenance the hard and ungracious doctrine of endless misery, much less can it find a congenial spirit in the mild and gracious gospel, which breathes "peace on earth, and good will to men." I hold it utterly inconsist-

ent, to suppose, that it was reserved for *that* gospel which is called the "ministration of life," and comes with the glad tidings of salvation from the curse of the law, to reveal penalties which the stern demands of the law itself could not approve.

But again: we have seen that the heathen taught and believed this doctrine, while Moses and the prophets taught it not. Do we therefore do justice to the Savior to suppose, that instead of building upon the foundation of Moses and the prophets, he took the teachings of the heathen for his model, and incorporated their fables into his religion. Are we prepared to say, that heathen poets and philosophers not only had a deeper and truer insight into the mysteries of the divine government, than the writers of the Old Testament; but that they absolutely anticipated the Savior, in the revelation of a main feature of his religion, long before his appearance; so that he had no more to do than just to follow on in the track that they had marked out, and repeat and confirm their teachings on this subject? All this we must admit, if we contend that this doctrine is taught in the New Testament. But the truth is, it is opposed to all the teachings of the Gospel, still more clearly than to the instructions of the law, as I will now proceed to show.

Take, then, the very ushering in of the gospel dispensation, and behold how poorly it can be made to harmonize with the sentiment in question. The shepherds were "watching their flocks by night,"

and the "glory of the Lord shone around them, and the angel of the Lord came upon them. And they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you this day is born, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men."

When the shepherd made known the vision, a thrill of holy and rapturous joy went through all that believed. Old Simeon went into the temple, and when he saw the child Jesus, he clasped him in his arms and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people." Now, whether we consider these extraordinary circumstances, or reflect upon the import of the heavenly messages, in either case it will be found difficult to see any harmony with them in the awful and cheerless dogma of endless torments.

Why did the angels rejoice, the heavenly hosts shout aloud in the raptures of their spirits, and the good men of earth sing praises to God, at the birth of the Redeemer? Think you it was in view of the belief, that he had come to reveal and to denounce upon the world a state of future suffering, in comparison with which all the curses of the law,

and all the collected sufferings of this world, were as nothing and less than nothing, and vanity? Behold the heavenly hosts rejoicing, and the holy men of earth shouting praises, at the Savior's birth; and then think of the fabled hell, its wailings of despair, its endless groans and tears, and ask whether there is harmony or communion between the two subjects? If there be, I confess I am unable to discover in what it consists.

But hearken, for a moment, to the substance of the angel-borne message. "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people." This was a broad and catholic spirit. It was no message of joy for the few, and of hopeless wo for the many. But it was a message of great joy unto all people. I cannot conceive how the doctrine of endless misery can be considered a message of joy to any human being; and therefore I must hold it to be utterly opposed to the gospel, of which the bright angel from heaven was the harbinger.

The Savior came, and his was a message of universal peace and good will. He opened his lips with blessings; and the people "wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went into the synagogue, and stood up to read; and he opened to the place where it was written, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath annointed me to preach

the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison door to them that are bound." And he began to say unto them, "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Here was a declaration of the nature of his message, and surely it looks like any thing else rather than the doctrine of endless hell torments.

Moreover, he taught plainly and unequivocally the universal care of our heavenly Father; and appealed to the shining sun and falling rain, to the flowers of the field, and the fowls of the air, as the evidences of that care which would not suffer the tiny sparrow to fall unnoticed to the ground. If God so bless these will he not take care of you? O, ye of little faith," was his argument. And that there might be no mistake, he declared that he came to save the lost; and affirmed positively, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Let those who feel themselves competent to the work, gird themselves to the task, and show that all these things are perfectly consistent, and in no way opposed to the idea that Jesus came to proclaim, and that he will ultimately execute upon a large portion of the human family, endless and unmerciful wo. I confess, it is a work that I dare not undertake.

The teachings of the apostles sent out to proclaim the gospel, after the departure of our Lord, are equally opposed to the strange dogma in ques-

tion. I begin with the singular fact, that in all the acts of the apostles, there is no passage which the advocates of endless misery claim as a proof of that sentiment. Here is a history of the travels and preaching of the apostles, extending over a period of about thirty years from the death of Christ, and yet, it contains no word of the doctrine we are now examining. How can we account for this fact, on the supposition that this sentiment forms a part and parcel of the gospel? Shall we say that the disciples kept back this part of their message? Nay: for they were faithful and true witnesses; and it is absolutely incredible, that they should have believed their hearers all the while standing in danger of endless perdition, and yet never warn them of their danger. Moreover, Paul expressly asserts that he "had not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God," and calls on the brethren to bear him witness that he had kept nothing back. And yet, there is no account of his having uttered one word of the doctrine of endless misery. How shall we account for this, I again ask? Shall we say that the apostles preached it, but the historian omitted to record their teachings on that subject? Where is the evidence of that fact? All we know of the subject matter of their preaching, we must learn from history. And when any man takes it upon himself to say, that they taught things not contained in the record, it is bare conjecture, and nothing more. And it is a

conjecture, too, of all others, most improbable. Suppose a man should write a history of the churches in this city for the last thirty years. Let him give an account of the various churches; their rise and progress; the travels of the different preachers, and give reports of their sermons. Think you an honest man would do this, and yet give no intimation that the doctrine of endless misery had been believed or preached here? Nay, but that doctrine would stand out conspicuously upon every page, and breathe in every sermon. And yet, St. Luke gives a history of the church during thirty years. He takes us along with him in his travels with Paul, and Peter, and Barnabas, and many others. He tells of their controversies and gives reports of their Sermons delivered to an ignorant people, on purpose to instruct them in the principles of the new religion, and yet, no trace of the doctrine of endless misery can be found in his history. It is no easy matter to reconcile this fact with the supposition that the apostles taught that sentiment.

But there is evidence, clear and abundant, from from the acts of the apostles and their letters to the churches, that they did teach sentiments forever at war with that doctrine. Peter, when he addressed the murderers of the Savior, and in the same breath that he charges them with the crime, says, that they are "the children of the prophets, and of the covenant that God made with the fathers;"

and he tells them of the "times of the restitution of all things which God had spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

So Paul talks of the "reconciliation of all things to God," through Christ, and of "all things in heaven and earth, and under the earth," bowing to him and confessing him. And he assures us, that the free gift had come upon all men unto justification of life. He testifies of a Savior, who tasted death for every man,—who gave himself a ransom for all, and who would "put down all rule, all authority and power, that God might be all in all." This does not sound much like the doctrine of endless misery.

But he is still more explicit, and he thus sums up the reasons for the persecutions they suffered in those days: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, for therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the Living God, who is Savior of all men,—especially of them that believe." Here the matter is placed beyond all doubt. They believed not in a God who would eternally damn half the world; but in one who was the Savior of all, and for this very reason, they labored and suffered reproach.

Those who believe and preach endless misery for a large part of their fellow creatures, are not often, I believe, reproached for trusting in God, the Savior of all men.

I have thus given you but a few of the reasons

that induce me to reject the doctrine of endless misery. To me they appear well founded and just. Think of these things, I pray you, and above all things, "Search the Scriptures like the noble Bereans, daily to see if these things are so."

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SERMON V.

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." Matt. xxv. 46.

Perhaps there is not another passage of the Scriptures so frequently quoted, as this text, in proof of the doctrine of endless misery, which we have had under consideration in the preceding discourses. Augustine, who flourished in the early part of the fifth century, is, so far as I know, the first to apply the text in proof of that sentiment. In the year 415 he wrote a work against Universalism, in which he quotes the text, as a full refutation of the doctrine of unlimited grace; and if this is not the first time the text was so quoted, it is, at least, the first time that an attempt was made to show that the passage does in reality teach endless punishment. Augustine was a Latin author, and but poorly acquainted with the Greek language; yet he attempts a criticism upon the word here rendered everlasting and eternal.

He first contends, that the word always means an endless duration; but he afterwards admits, that there are instances where it may not have that signification. He however quotes this passage,

"These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal," and remarks, that as the same original word is rendered, "everlasting" and "eternal," so if the Originists limited the duration of the punishment, they must, to be consistent, limit the duration of the life. From that day to the present, the same argument has been repeated; and though it has been refuted more than twice ten thousand times, still it is repeated, from the D. D. down to the humblest layman, and may be heard with as much confidence as if it were really something new in the theological world. The truth is, it is something more than fourteen hundred years old; and it may be named, not much to the credit of the advocates of endless misery, that they have not much improved in their mode of defending that doctrine. In this work of Augustine, who, by the way, is, instead of Calvin, the real author of the Calvinistic system, you may find nearly all the objections now urged against Universalism; so that the flight of fourteen centuries has scarcely added an arrow to their quiver, or one item of strength to their bow.

Of this argument, I have but little to say, in this part of my subject. I shall allude to it again before I close; and at present I merely state, what are regarded and conceded by all scholars, as well settled and undoubted facts, in reference to this word.

The word, as you well know, is *aionion*, and no

Universalist is likely to forget that it occurs in both clauses of the text; and is in one case translated "everlasting," and in the other, "eternal." The literal meaning of the word is, "age lasting," and it is usually used to denote a long and indefinite period of time. That it is sometimes employed in reference to an unlimited duration of time, is a position that I never heard a Universalist deny; and that it is often, yea, very often, applied to things that were to exist but a short time, is also a fact that no well informed advocate of endless misery thinks of denying for a moment. The result is, that the word is indefinite in its signification. It may mean a few years, or days, or it may mean an age, or an eternity; and the meaning in different instances must be determined by the connexion, or the nature of the subject. Thus, when the word is applied, as it frequently is, to the mountains and hills and to the life of man, we conclude that it must mean a limited duration, because it is used to qualify things that are passing and perishable in their nature. But when the word is applied to God, we conclude that it means an unlimited duration, for God is immortal and unchangeable in his nature. We do not in this instance say, that God is endless in his existence *because* the word everlasting is applied to him. But on the contrary, we say that the word everlasting here means an endless duration because it is applied to God. The argument for the endless duration, intended in this instance, is

not founded upon the mere force of the word, but upon the nature of the subject to which it is applied. God will exist forever, we believe; not simply because the word everlasting is applied to him, but because he is unchangeable in his nature.

So punishment may be endless; but the simple fact that the word everlasting is applied to it does not prove it to be so. The *proof* of that must come from the nature of the thing itself, or from other passages of Scripture. Now I aver, that these are views of that word which no man of tolerable attainments will risk his reputation in an attempt to deny. In fact, they are not denied. Those who defend the doctrine of endless misery know full well, and admit freely, that this word is indefinite in its meaning, and that radically, and according to the "usus loquendi," it does not clearly and invariably express endless duration. And yet, after a man has made this admission, it will be remarkable if, in the course of fifteen minutes, he does not quote the words, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," as clear proof of the sentiment of endless wo. So it has been for fourteen hundred years, and it is still necessary for the nine hundred and ninety-ninth time, at least, to remind the advocate of this doctrine, of what he already knows as well as any living man, and confesses as often as the case is put to him, that this is an indefinite word, and does not, in and of itself, prove its subject to be of endless duration. First let him

prove that punishment is in its nature endless, and then he may presume that this word is used in that sense in the text.

The argument that the word is here used antithetically, in a contrast with life, and that therefore, to make the antithesis perfect we must say, that it means as much in one part of the text as the other, I shall have occasion to review before I close.

At present, I direct your attention to the well known and universally admitted fact, that the word here rendered "everlasting" and "eternal," is indefinite, and does not, by itself alone, mean an endless duration. Lay, therefore, the argument for endless misery, so far as the mere force of this word is concerned, out of the question. That word alone, proves nothing; for it means only an indefinite period. It may be a week, a month, a year, an age, or a series of ages; or, it may be an eternity; and which of these meanings it bears in the text, must be determined, not by the word itself, but by other scriptures, or by the subject to which it is applied.

I am anxious to be clearly understood here, for I wish to start on fair and even ground with the advocate of endless misery. I would not give him one line of advantage from the fact, that the term everlasting is applied to punishment. He is entitled to none. I have as good a right to assume, that the word means, in this text, three days and

nights, no more or less, as he, that it means an eternity; for in both of these senses it is used in the Scriptures. In which sense is it used in the text, is the question at issue? And though it may be convenient for one side or the other, to beg that question, and though such a course may chime with the pipings of prejudice, and pass, with those who are blind with bigotry, for argument, yet, it cannot be allowed in any fair and honorable discussion. With these remarks, I proceed to inquire,

1. *When* was the text to be fulfilled?

The common opinion is, that it relates to a general day of judgment, in another world, when all men are to be assembled at the bar of God, and judged for the deeds done in the present life. So general is this opinion, that some editions of the Bible have this chapter headed with the ominous caption, "Description of the Last Judgment." To this application of the text, however, there are in my mind, many and serious objections; some of which it may not be improper for me to lay before you.

First of all, such an application of the passage would make the eternal destiny of the creature dependent upon his own works. It will be perceived at once, that whatever may be meant by the punishment and the life here mentioned, good or bad works are given as the procuring cause of the one and the other. On the one hand, those who are cast off are informed that they had not done

certain things; and on the other, those who enter into life are told, that they had performed certain works. Now I say that the Scriptures do not teach that man's destiny in the future world is to be fixed by his works. But from the beginning to the end of the New Testament, future salvation is represented to be of free grace, and not of works, lest any man should boast. It is therefore easy to see, that the future application of the passage, violates the whole tenor of the gospel, by removing the foundation of Christian hope and faith from God's grace to man's works; and I cannot too earnestly recommend to those who thus apply the passage, to cease their boasting of salvation by grace, and prepare to meet the final issue on the merits of their own works alone. And these works, are not prayers, or professions, nor church going, nor Psalm singing; but real works of charity done to the poorest and humblest of their brethren in the flesh. Let them prepare to go up to the final judge and say, "Lord we have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and the prisoner in distress, and for these works we claim to be rewarded by an entrance into eternal life." Then, and not till then, will they be prepared to meet the issue, which they choose in the use they make of this text.

Again, none of the evangelists except Matthew, record this representation of the sheep and goats. Matthew alone records it, while Mark Luke and

John omit it entirely. Had it been intended to teach a doctrine of such mighty import, as that of a day of general judgment in another world, how can we account for the circumstance that it should be omitted entirely by three out of the four Evangelists? It is easy enough to account for this omission, on the supposition, that it had a reference to the separation of the nations, at the overthrow of the Jewish dispensation which is described in other terms by Mark, and Luke, and which is omitted entirely by John, simply because the event was past when he wrote his gospel. But if we say, that this is a description of a future and general judgment I know not how three evangelists could profess to give a history of the teachings of Christ, and yet leave out so important a part.

Again, none of the disciples in their preaching as recorded in the acts of apostles, or in the letters written to the churches, have ever alluded to the 25th of Matthew as teaching the doctrine of a future day of judgment, or even intimated that they understood the Savior to teach such a doctrine. Surely if the disciples had understood Christ, in the text, to teach a sentiment so momentous, as that of a day of general judgment to eventuate in the ceaseless wo of multitudes of the human race, we might expect them to preach it, not once merely, but at all times. But they do not thus preach; and hence I conclude that they did not so understand the text.

But there is no necessity of arguing this point, at length. It is one on which we are not left to doubtful disputations; for the time of the fulfillment of the text is fixed by the clear testimony of the Savior. He did not leave them to spell out the time, but he told them plainly when it should be, and much as the question has been mooted in the church, there is not in reality, the least difficulty in the case. Will we but lay aside our creeds and do the Divine teacher the justice to take his own words for truth, then the time is fixed beyond all controversy.

Let it be observed, then, that the 24th and 25th chapters of Matthew form one continued discourse, which was delivered in answer to the very question we have now under consideration. Jesus had been shown the temple, and had said that the day was coming when it should be thrown down, so that there should not be left one stone upon another. The disciples, curious to know when this strange event would happen, came to him privately, as he sat on the Mount of Olives, and said unto him, "Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Let it be observed here, that the term *world*, for the end of which they inquired, was not the material world. The original word is not "kosmos," which means the material world, but "aion," which signifies, age or dispensation; the same word from which the adjective translated,

everlasting and eternal, is derived, and would be better rendered age.

Here, then, the disciples inquired, when the temple should be destroyed, and what should be the sign of the coming of Christ, and of the end of that age or dispensation. The Savior attempted to answer that question; and it would be most singular indeed, if, after having occupied two whole chapters in an attempt to answer a simple question, he should after all, have left it without an answer. He has not so left it, but he has answered it; and to his own, as the best of all answers, I now invite your attention.

Looking back to the 31st verse of this chapter, we read as follows: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." He then goes on to say how he should separate them, and what he should say to those on his right hand, and on his left, &c. We may here see that the text was to have its fulfillment at the time, "when the Son of man should come in his glory, with all the holy angels." This provokes the question, When was he to come? Go back to the 24th chapter, and, commencing with the 29th verse, you shall read as follows: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the

heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." That this is the coming at which the text was to be fulfilled, is evident from the similarity of the language, and from the grammatical construction of the discourse, which renders it impossible to construe it any other way. In one case it is said, "The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." In the other, he says, "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, and he shall send his angels," &c. That reference is had to one and the same time here, cannot be doubted for a moment.

Do you ask when this coming of Christ was to take place? You shall have the answer in his own words, immediately following his reference to this coming, at the 33d verse of the 24th chapter. "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." You here perceive, that the Savior did not know the precise *day*,

and *hour* in which that coming should take place, yet he did know that it should come before that generation should pass away.

It has been said that the term generation, here employed, means a race of men, and that as the Jewish race is not yet extinct, so the event may yet be future. Such a criticism is sustained by no scholar, and is scarcely worthy of a remark. It so happens, however, that Christ had before mentioned this same coming, and fixed the time in terms so definite that even this miserable subterfuge cannot avail.

In the 16th chapter of Matthew, at the 27th verse, we read as follows: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his works." There can be no doubt that this coming of Christ with his angels, to reward every man according to his works; and the time to which our text alludes, "when he should come in his glory, with all his holy angels with him," and send some to everlasting punishment, and some to life eternal," are one and the same time. Should you ask, when was he to come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, to reward every man according to his works? You shall have his own answer in the next verse. "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

Here then you have the time of the fulfillment of the text, fixed by the authority of Christ himself; and if any credit is to be given to his word, then is it certain that this coming of the Savior to judge, reward and punish, took place during the life time of some who heard him. And he who says that it is yet future, must settle the controversy with Christ, and not with me. I might go on and show, that all the various signs that he gave as the immediate precursors of this event, such as earthquakes, famines, pestilences, the rising of nation against nation, fearful sights, signs, wonders, false prophets and false Christs,—that all these did actually appear immediately preceding the overthrow of the Jewish nation, and the end of the Jewish age, and hence argue that the fulfillment of the text is past. But what were the use? If men will not hear and believe Christ himself, of what avail will be the voice of history or the concurrence of a thousand circumstances?

If I were an infidel, I would read the stickler for the future application of this passage, a lesson which would cause his ears to tingle. I would say to him, Sir, Jesus said he would come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, to reward every man according to his works. And when distinctly asked, when that event should take place, he said that he did not know the day or the hour; yet he did know, that it should happen before that generation should pass, and that there were some standing

there who should not taste death until they should see him thus come. Now that generation has passed, and all who stood there have been dead near eighteen hundred years; and yet you say he has not come to reward men according to their works. Where, then, is the truthfulness of Christ? And where the evidence that he was even a prophet, and not a rank impostor?

Let the man who contends for the future application of this text take heed, that he be not found joining hands with the infidel; or while he retains his present position, let him at least, for decency's sake, cease his endless railing at the infidelity of Universalists, because they are willing to take Christ at his word, and believe that he did come as he said he would, before that generation passed away. We affirm that he came as he said, and appeal to his word and to history for the proof. And yet we are infidels, and those who falsify the words of Christ, and make him a false prophet, are his true disciples! To such lengths does the blind bigotry of a crazy world run!

We have seen that the text, whatever it may mean, was to have its fulfillment in the generation in which the Savior lived. We now inquire, who they were that were to go into everlasting punishment. Keeping close to the Scriptures, there is not the least imaginable difficulty in finding the true answer to these questions. Beginning with those who were to go away into everlasting punishment,

we find them, in the 44th verse, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" They had no idea that they had neglected any duty. Still further back they are represented as omitting to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, but yet claiming to have prophesied and cast out devils. So in the 33d verse, they are represented as being placed upon the left hand of the king. So those who were to go away into life eternal, are mentioned in the preceding context as feeding the Savior, visiting him in sickness and in prison, and yet, as not being aware that they had served him—and they were placed on the right hand.

Looking again, at the 31st and 32d verses, you read as follows: "When the son of man shall come in his glory and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered *all nations*, and he shall separate them as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." You have now learned that this was a *national* affair, and not an individual matter. It was *nations* that were to be gathered before him; *nations* that were to be separated, and *nations* that were to go away into everlasting punishment and life eternal. But to what nations does he allude? Can any man fail to recognize in those who are charged with neglecting to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and who professed not to know that they had neglected duty, the features of those

Jews of whom the Savior said, "ye do indeed pay tythes of mint and annice and cumin, but ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith"? or can any one fail to see, in those whom he charges with neglect of him and his disciples, the same people over whom, but one short hour before, he had wept, saying, "Oh! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that stonest the prophets, and killest them that were sent, how oft would I have gathered you," &c.? Or can any man fail to discover in those who are represented as doing the works of love; those Gentiles who uniformly treated him with kindness, and in their ignorance that they had served him; the identical trait mentioned by the apostles, where he says, the Gentiles having no law, are a law unto themselves, and do by nature the things contained in the law? These were the nations that were to be gathered before the throne of his glory—separated, and sent, some to everlasting punishment, and some into life eternal.

Accordingly, the event corresponded with the prediction. A few years passed away, and Jerusalem was as the Savior said it should be, encompassed with armies; there the nations were assembled; *there* and *then* the great city fell; the Jewish age, or dispensation came to an end; the power of that nation was brought down to the dust, and the people were scattered and dispersed. Hitherto, they had been a chosen people, exalted at God's right hand,

but now they were upon the left, and were sent away into a long and dreary punishment, where they and their children have been from that day to the present. At the same time, the teachers of the gospel turned, as they were commanded, to the Gentiles, and thus the door was opened for them to enter into the life of the gospel.

If it should be asked, what is meant by the everlasting punishment? I answer, that very punishment into which the Jewish nation were turned, and in which they have suffered and wandered for eighteen hundred years. If it be asked how long that punishment is to contine? My answer is—God only knows; I cannot tell. But we are certified, that it shall not be endless; for "blindness in part hath happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved."

Is it still asked, what is meant by the eternal life into which those who were on the right hand entered? My answer shall be, in the language of the inspired penman: "This is eternal life, to know thee, the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Life eternal, is gospel life—consisting in the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ. Into this life, the Gentile nations entered, when the Jews were cast out, and the messengers of the gospel turned to them to preach the words of eternal life.

I here allude again to the argument I have

before noticed, which contends that, as the same word occurs in the two clauses of the text, therefore it must mean as much in one case as the other. I freely grant, what it assumes. There is no necessity of understanding the term eternal here, as strictly endless in its signification. It is not used to signify a state of immortality and blessedness in another world, but that knowledge of God and his Christ, which the believer enjoys in the present life. In neither part of the text, therefore, does this word signify a strictly endless duration, and without benefit to the doctrine of endless misery, it may be conceded that the word signifies as much in one passage as the other. I have now done. I have given you what I verily believe to be the true intent of the text. I will merely add that several eminent commentators who believe in endless misery, have given the same exposition.

Examine for yourselves; fear not to investigate freely and fully. I have one request to make, which is, that you will sit down and read the 24th and 25th chapters of Matthew, which you will find to be one continued discourse. It commences with an account of the signs that should precede the destruction of Jerusalem. Read attentively, and when you come to the verse where the author leaves that subject, and begins upon a day of general judgment, mark that verse—publish it abroad, and many will thank you for information, which the world has not yet possessed.

SERMON VI.

SALVATION AND DAMNATION.

"And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Mark, xvi: 15, 16.

I preface the present discourse with a single remark, which I desire the hearer to remember; and whatever else you may forget of my observations, do not, I pray you, forget this: "All truth is eternal and immutable." It exists independent of man's belief or unbelief,—lives by its own inherent immortality, and can never change or die. Though all the world believe a truth, it is no more true on that account; and were all mankind to unite in disbelieving a truth, it would still be just as true as if they all believed it.

I make the above remark, and desire the hearer to remember it, simply because the common application of the text, is founded upon the contrary supposition, that man can make a thing true or false, by believing or disbelieving.

I will explain my meaning. The gospel is a declaration of truth. It declares that Jesus Christ is "the Savior of the world." It is to be preached to every creature, and they are all called upon to

believe it. Why? Because it is true, and will eternally remain true, whether they believe it or not. But no, says popular doctrine. "Christ will save no man unless he believes." Very well. Suppose that all men should refuse to believe that Christ is their Savior. Then of course not a soul of them would be saved. Where, then, would be the truth that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world? It would turn out to be no truth at all, but a lie. And so the whole world would be damned, because they did not believe a thing that was not in itself true.

Suppose, then, one of those lost souls should inquire of the Savior, "Lord, for what am I doomed to these torments?" The answer is: Because you did not believe on me as your Savior. Might not the answer be: "Lord, thou wast not my Savior; thou hast not saved me; and if I had believed that thou wast, I should have believed a lie." But I *would* have saved thee, if thou hadst believed. "Ah! I see it now. If I had believed a lie, my faith would have changed that lie to a truth. But is too late now, and I must suffer eternally, because I believed all the days of my life I had no interest in thee, which proves to be the real truth; and had I believed otherwise, I should have believed a lie for the purpose of making that lie true." Does not the hearer see at a glance, that Paul was more consistent, when he says: "Though we believe not, he is faithful,

He cannot deny himself." Thus recognizing the great principle with which I started, that truth is *eternal*, and exists independent of the belief or unbelief of man.

The common exposition of the text on which the above remarks are intended to bear, supposes it to apply to all men, and refers its rewards and punishments to the future world; as if it read, "He that believeth not in this life, shall be damned in the future world." So deeply is this view of the passage engraven upon the public mind, that I must dwell on it, at some length, and use some plainness in exposing its utter absurdity. The bigot may sneer, and the self-righteous scoff, at an attempt to show that the passage has been perverted; and they may call it an attempt of a Universalist to sustain a creed and evade the true meaning of the threatenings of the Bible. But with God's leave, and a little patience on your part, I will show all such that it is a matter in which they have a personal interest, as well as the speaker.

There is a strong propensity in man to appropriate the promises of the gospel to himself, and pass its curses over to his neighbor. This is the reason that this text is so often, and so confidently quoted, in proof of the endless damnation of a great part of the human family. The man who quotes it, has no idea that any thing but the salvation belongs to him. He dreams not, that if this passage is the ground on which he denounces future woe upon

man, it will, with a certainty as definite as fate, consign the whole race to ceaseless torments. And yet, such is the fact, as I will proceed to show.

Observe, what I fear you have never observed before, the plain and positive language of the text: "He that believeth not, *shall* be damned." Whatever may be meant by the damnation here threatened, it is certain to come upon all who believe not.

Admit that it refers to future and endless damnation, and you close the doors of heaven upon all the heathen world, and upon all idiots, and such as die in infancy: for, not one of them believes, and they must be damned. This is of itself a terrible sweep of the besom of destruction, which would seem enough to make a man pause and think; for, the heathen, and such as die in infancy, comprise more than nine-tenths of the family of man.

But we must come nearer home. Here is the preacher himself. Suppose, in a friendly way, we catechise him a little. You tell me that the text teaches the endless damnation of the unbeliever. Have you, sir, ever been an unbeliever? Oh! yes, I resisted the strivings of the spirit for a long time, and refused to believe. Well, as you have been a somewhat obstinate unbeliever, by your own confession, will you be kind enough to tell me whether you have been damned for your unbelief? I pray you, do not evade that question, for it is one in which you are very nearly interested. You

have been an unbeliever; have you been damned? Well, then, you will be, if there is any truth in the text as you understand it; and you may have the consolation of knowing that you must share that doom which you preach to other unbelievers. Ah! (says he) that alters the case. I must explain. I have repented of my unbelief; and if a man repents— And if? There is no IF in that text. Its language is positive. He that believeth not, *shall* be damned. And I perceive, also, that you could settle the business well enough without an *if*, so long as others are concerned; but when darling self comes in question, you are qiute willing to thrust in an IF, and take the benefit of a spiritual insolvent act under the name of repentance, for the purpose of settling all demands against you for years of obdurate unbelief.

I tell you of a truth, that while, on the one hand, no believer ever failed of the salvation promised in the text; so, on the other, no unbeliever ever did, or ever can, escape the damnation it threatens. The language is plain, positive and unconditional, without any proviso whatever; and if it has failed in one jot or tittle, then there is a full end of all confidence, either in the promises or threatenings of the gospel.

But I have not yet done with this view of the subject. It is one upon which men are so slow of heart to believe, that they must have "line upon line, and precept upon precept," before they will

be persuaded. Read, if you please, what follows our text: "And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." These are the signs that should follow them that believed in the sense of the text, and the promise is plain. You profess to be believers to whom the text is applicable, and on its authority, you consign others to the pains of hell forever. But where is the evidence that you have part or lot in the meaning of this text? Can you speak with tongues? or cast out devils? or drink deadly things? or lay hands on the sick, that they may recover? Ye profess to believe, and found your hopes of heaven upon the presumption that ye are believers in the sense of the text. But where is the evidence? Go, thou proud vaunting man. Go, cast out devils, and let thy unlettered tongue speak the languages of the earth. Go! play with the forked tongue of the serpent, and drink the dews that distil from the deadly upas. Go! breathe the noisome vapor of the lazar-house, and while wan disease is all around you, speak the word that shall call flesh to the bones and strength to the nerves of the feeble sufferers there. When this is done, ye may with propriety claim to be of the number of those to whom the text is applied. But till then, you have

no part in this matter. Now, as no living man can work these miracles, so no living man is a believer in the sense here contemplated; and hence, if the text is the authority on which we are to decide who are to be saved ultimately, and who lost, there is no man living that can be saved—but all are lost.

But I have not yet done with this common view of the subject. It not merely closes the doors of heaven on all the human family, but it denies the truthfulness of Christ himself. An infidel would go to the man who makes the common use of the text, and say to him: "Here is a text which was among the last words of Christ, which declares that "he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned;" and affirms that certain signs should follow those that believed. You hold the text to be applicable to all ages, and to all men. You are a believer in Christ, and there are many more who believe; and yet, not one of you can show these signs. What, then, is the inference? Plainly, this: the promise has failed, and if the promises of Christ fail in one instance, they may in all others, and his whole system is a fable unworthy of confidence. To such lengths are otherwise reasonable men carried by their bigotry. And yet, if I should step in, and endeavor to convince the infidel that he did not truly understand the text; that it was limited in its application to the disciples alone, and taught not

the doctrine of endless wo, and that it had been fulfilled according to its true import; my reward for this well meant effort to vindicate the name and the religion of Christ, from the attacks of infidels, would be that I should be denounced as an infidel myself, and even the common courtesies of life, by those who claim to be Christians "par excellence." To all this I add no more than the prayer of the Savior: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

I trust by this time, my hearers clearly see the propriety and necessity of seeking some view of the text, which shall harmonize with the eternity of truth, give glory to God, honor to the Savior and his religion, and hope to man. Lend me, then, your attention, and I will give you what I suppose to be the true intent and application of the text.

I begin, then, with the position that this passage has primary and exclusive reference to the primitive followers of Christ. I found this upon the fact that certain signs were to follow those that believed in the sense here indicated, which signs did follow them, and none else,

I remark further, that the term "saved" does not always have reference to the future state, but to deliverance from evils in this life. As "for instance," when Peter, about to sink, cried, "Lord save me," he asked to be saved from drowning.

So the word "damned" is too harsh a translation of the original. It is the same word that is

rendered condemned, as in the passage that says: "He that believeth not, is condemned already." To this I add, that the word gospel means simply good news or good tidings.

With these remarks, I will come to show you how the text was peculiarly applicable to the disciples, and what was its import. The disciples were Jews, and the mission of Christ was primarily to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. That nation had for a long series of ages been the chosen and peculiar people of God, for he had made it the depository of his revelations and laws. But the prophets had foretold its downfall; and Jesus himself had warned them, that the day of their destruction was nigh; that Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, and their temple demolished, and upon that generation should come "all the righteous blood" that had been shed upon the earth. These, said he, are "the days of vengeance, when all things that are written shall be fulfilled;" and in reference to them, he said, "Except the days be shortened, no flesh should be saved." But he promised salvation to those that believed on him. He pointed out the signs that should precede this day of condemnation and wrath, and warned them, when they saw those signs, to flee to the mountains for safety. He told them that he should go up to Jerusalem and be crucified, but that he would rise again.

All this had been done. He had been put to

death, and they had seen him deposited in the tomb, and with him, all their hopes of deliverance from those evils which they were well aware were impending. His resurrection they believed not. Hence they said, "we trusted that it had been he that should redeem Israel." But their hopes were cut off. And in sadness they gathered together to bemoan their sad fate, and lament for the destruction that was nigh.

Then came Mary Magdalene, and told them, that Jesus had risen, and she had seen him; "but they mourned and wept, and believed not." Then came two of their own number, who affirmed that he had risen, and they had seen and walked with him; but they believed not even them. Then (says the historian) Jesus himself "appeared unto the eleven, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them that had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, go ye into all the world and preach the good news (gospel) to every creature." Preach the good news! What good news? Why, evidently, the good news of his resurrection, which they would not believe, though affirmed by two of their own number, and for the unbelief of which he was upbraiding them.

Mark attentively: "He upbraided them with their unbelief, *because they believed not* them that had seen him after he was risen, and said unto them, go ye into all the world," &c. As if he had

said: Why are ye so unbelieving? You have seen my power displayed in signs and miracles, and wonders, that I have wrought before you. I told you I should be crucified and slain, and promised you that I would rise from the dead. But ye mourn as if some strange thing had happened. Mary Magdalene, and two of your own number have seen me, and yet ye refuse to believe that I have risen. Now here I am. Behold me with your own eyes. Unbelieving Thomas, come feel the print of the nails in my hands, and thrust your hand into my side, and behold it is I, that stand before you. I am risen from the dead. Go ye into all the world and preach the good news to every creature. But no more of your unbelief. Go, believing; for he among you that believeth, and is baptized with the holy ghost that I will shed down upon you, shall be saved—delivered from the calamities that are coming upon this evil and adulterous generation; but he that believeth not shall fall under that condemnation that is out against this people. And I will confirm your faith by signs and wonders. "These signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

John said, "I indeed baptize you with water, but one cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoes I

am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the holy ghost and with fire." The disciples went out; they preached Jesus and the resurrection. In the second chapter of the acts of the apostles, you may read how they were baptized with the holy ghost and with fire, and the signs followed. "They were with one accord in one place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven of a rushing wind, and there appeared to them cloven tongues, like as fire; and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the holy ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance." And there were there "devout men of every nation under heaven, and then, they that dwelt in Media and Parthia, in Egypt and Mesopotamia; the sojourner upon the plains of Arabia, where the patriarchs pitched their tents of old; the learned and polished Greek, and the steel-girt soldier of Rome, all heard their native tongues spoken by the unlearned and unlettered fishermen of Galilee." There the same man who came leaning upon his crutch, went leaping like the bounding roe; the emaciated frame of the poor sufferer upon a bed of sickness, became vigorous and strong; and the wild, staring eyes of the maniac, beamed again with the light of reason, and were bright with faith and hope. Thus did the disciples believe; thus were they baptized with the holy ghost, and thus did the signs follow them that believed. And when at last the desolation

came; when the great city was girt with armies, its walls of adamant crumbling before the engines of the enemy, and the tall towers of the temple itself nodding and tottering to their fall; and famine and pestilence wan and pale, were walking through all those streets; and death, ghastly death, making his carnival of human flesh and blood; then the Christians fled and were saved; and those that mocked the Savior, perished. And thus, those that believed and were baptized, were saved, and those that believed not, were damned; and so the text in all its parts was proven true, and was fulfilled. And this, I have no manner of doubt, is the true meaning of the text, and the only meaning it was intended to convey to those to whom it was addressed, by its author.

That there is an accommodated sense, in which the principle of the text may be applied to all who hear the gospel in every age, I do not deny; but that its real import, and its authoritative meaning was confined to the immediate followers of Christ, who with faith were endued with the power of working signs and performing miracles, I hold to be proved beyond all fair controversy.

I have stated, that the gospel, or good tidings, to which there is a special reference in the text, is the fact of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, concerning which the disciples were faithless, and for their unbelief of which he was at the time upbraiding them. Upon this point, accordingly, you

hear the apostles insisting at all times, insomuch, that in many instances when the historian would give an idea of their preaching, he says briefly: "They preached Jesus and the resurrection." It should be observed, however, that it was not the mere isolated fact that Christ rose from the dead that gave to this event its vast importance. This was the corner stone on which Christianity rested, and formed the ground of hope that man should be raised from the dead; for says Paul, "if Christ be not risen, your faith is vain." Once let it be proved that Christ has not risen, and it is also proved that he is an impostor, his religion a fable, and all man's hopes of a resurrection, futile and vain.

So, then, to preach the good news of his resurrection, is not to dwell upon a single truth alone, but it is to preach a first principle, with which is associated, and on which is founded a great system of truth. In this light, the resurrection of Christ is good news, or gospel to every creature, and is to be preached as such to all men, because it is the pledge to each and every one, that as Christ rose, so he shall rise also.

But it would be no good news to me to be informed that I am to be raised from the dead, if that resurrection is to be the means of introducing me to a state of endless wretchedness and wo. But, if we put the best construction on the subject, and say

that I have no fears but that it will be well with me, in the resurrection; yet, that is not enough, to make that doctrine good news to me. I have a wife and children, whose welfare is entwined with every fibre of my being. Precious as the apple of my eye—dear as my own right arm, is that welfare to my soul. I cannot tear myself from these and hail as a message of good, that which proclaims bliss for me, but wo for them. How shall my loved ones fare in that upper world? is a question that will force itself upon my mind; and if they are not included in the blessed boon, then is the resurrection itself mockery, and the tones of its trumpet shall fall upon my ear, like the tolling of the solemn bell that calls me to the funeral of all I love, and sounds the sad requiem of every joy.

Yea, I do declare, in all the sincerity of my soul, if I thought it were possible, that in the eternal world, I should be compelled to walk the golden streets of the New Jerusalem with one of my children wailing in hell, I would shrink away from the doctrine of the resurrection, as from a messenger of despair. I would pray God to hide me in some low corner of the universe, where the trumpet of the archangel would never reach my ears; and the last prayer that lingered upon my quivering lips, in death, should be, Lord! let me sleep on, and sleep on forever; and spare an anxious father's heart, and raise.

him not up from the dead to witness the agony of his children!!

I say, then, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is to be preached as the pledge and guarantee that every son and daughter of Adam shall be raised in his likeness, and be joint heirs with him to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; bequeathed to us by our Father, which faith cannot procure, nor unbelief alienate. In this light alone, is that resurrection, what the text declares it to be, gospel, *good news*, to every creature.

Now, I say, that there is a salvation connected with faith in this gospel, and a condemnation consequent upon unbelief in every age, and in all nations, to which the principle of the text may be applied, and that without perversion. What, then, is the salvation of the believer? And what the damnation of the unbeliever? These are questions often asked, and it comes within the scope of my lecture at this time, to answer them.

The condemation of the unbeliever is precisely what it was when it was said: "This is your condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness, rather than light." Loving darkness, men of course walk in it, and are condemned to all the ills of ignorance, and the miseries of superstition. If a man should shut his eyes to the blessed light of the sun, and go groping and stumbling at noon-day, would you say, he

ought to be damned in another world for it? Nay, but you would say, "poor man, he suffers for his folly," and you would find his condemnation in the very fact, that he chose darkness rather than light. Jesus is the light of the world, and what the sun is to the material, his gospel is to the moral world. He that believeth not, walketh in darkness. He stumbles in the day time. He conjures up ten thousand phantoms to torment him every day. He looks up to heaven and sees no father there to guide and bless him. He looks around him, and all is darkness. He looks to the grave, and there is no light there; to the future, and his guilty fears conjure up regions of fire and torment, where he awfully fears himself or those he loves will wail out an eternity of anguish. Thus, like those of old, he is, "through fear of death, all his life-time subject to bondage," and knoweth not that to deliver such, Jesus came. The truth will be proclaimed, and he will not hear. The golden clusters from Canaan may be presented ripe and mellow to his lips, and though he is starving, he spurns them as apples of Sodom. And thus he lives, the victim of doubt and fear. Will you damn him to all eternity for his folly? Nay, poor sufferer, he pays dear for his unbelief. He walketh in darkness, shut out from the light of hope and joy; and this is his condemnation: "That light has come into the world, and he has loved darkness better than light." If there is one such soul here, whose mind is

clouded with darkness and fear, and who is almost persuaded to be a Christian, let me intreat that soul not to close his eyes upon the heavenly vision now just dawning upon his benighted spirit. But let him lift his soul in confiding faith and hope to God, and pray, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

He that believeth, is saved from all these evils. There is no such condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. The believer looks up to heaven, and sees his Father, and the Father of the spirits of all flesh, and trusts him, without a doubt or a fear. He looks around him, and he sees the footsteps of his Father's love stamped upon every scene of life. He looks to the grave, and it is illuminated with the light of hope; to the future, and all is bright and glorious for him and for the world; and thus his days pass in the light of peace and joy, unclouded and serene. Do you ask, what good such faith can do? I answer: It can give you, here, in time, good hope and everlasting consolation. It can impart the soul's calm sunshine and the heartfelt joy. It can reconcile you to all the allotments of divine providence, and paint the bow of promise in every cloud that obscures the skies. It can sustain and support you in sickness, and put the song of victory upon your lips in the last struggles of expiring nature. This is what faith can do for you; and this is the salvation, *present* and

free, that belongs to him that believeth. Then let us all devoutly say:

"Oh! for a strong, a lasting faith,
To credit what Jehovah saith;
To hear the message of his son,
And call the joys of heaven our own."

SERMON VII.

HELL FOR THE WICKED.

"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Psalms ix. 17.

The most startling word in the vocabulary of the modern church is HELL. Used by long habit and common consent, as the name of a place of endless and intolerable anguish, in the future world, it falls upon the popular ear like the cry of the watchman proclaiming a city in flames. Poetry has exhausted its imagery, and eloquence has uttered its deepest thunders, in portraying the lively horrors of that awful place, to which this startling word is applied. The fervid imagination of Milton, the flowing numbers of Watts, the spirit-stirring eloquence of a Saurin and an Edwards, and a host of others, illustrious in the church, have all been called in requisition to depict the torments of hell. And these flights of the imagination, these vaultings of fancy have been mistaken for the oracles of eternal truth, until that word has become the talisman of despair; and all through the land, from lisping infancy to decrepit age, there is power in that word to thrill through every artery, and vibrate

upon every nerve of the soul. Of all the ingredients mingled in the cup of human misery, those furnished by this word are most bitter. Of all the sources of sorrow, this is the deepest and darkest; and I do not exaggerate when I say, that it causes more fear, more anxiety, more despair, and wets the green earth with more tears, than any other cause under the high canopy of heaven. I would, if I could, hush those anxious fears, and teach a doubting, trembling world to look up with trustful confidence and hope to its Father God, and feel that in his care and under his wise and gracious government all created humanity is safe; safe now, safe henceforth, and safe forevermore.

This is the work in which I am engaged in the present discourse, and I cannot avoid the conviction that it is important. But I know full well it is a work of no small magnitude. Educated as I was, in the common view of this matter, and taught it with most sedulous care from lisping infancy, I know full well the influence of early prejudices, and the difficulty of turning aside from associations and modes of thought fixed upon us by education and habit.

> "'Tis education forms the common mind;
> Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined."

The twig may indeed be bent with ease; but when the tree is grown it requires the strength of a son of Anak to make the crooked strait. I cannot help remembering that it is not the twig I have to bend.

But my business is to grapple with the mountain oak, and bend the stately trunk of that sturdy monarch of the forest, which has stood there through a thousand storms, wrestled with the furious winds, and dared even the thunder's bolt.

I pray you, my hearers, divest yourselves, as much as possible, of the influence of prejudice and fixed habits of thought. For one brief hour let the creed be forgotten; let all the phantoms that are so intimately associated with this fearful word *hell*, be banished from your thoughts, and come to this investigation with minds as free and unfettered as if it were the first time you had ever heard of that word.

Some friend has put into your hands the book of Psalms, and there you read for the first time the words of the text: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." You would at once inquire, What is this hell, into which the wicked are to be turned? And this is precisely the question to which I wish to direct your attention. The English word hell is derived from the Saxon "*helle*," which means "to conceal or cover over," and the noun is applied to any thing dark, hidden or concealed; so that in the etymology of this word there is no shadow of countenance for the meaning usually attached to it. If we look at the original Scriptures we shall find that there are four words which are translated by this one English word "hell." These are, "*sheol*,"

"*hades*," "*tartarus*," *and* "*gehenna*." The word used in the text is "sheol" in the Hebrew, and "hades" in the Greek version. As this is the word rendered hell in the text, of course it is the only one whose meaning I need discuss in the present discourse. Its literal meaning is, "the grave, or state of the dead." It occurs in the Old Testament sixty-four times; and is translated thirty-two times hell, twenty-nine times grave, and three times pit. Had it been uniformly rendered by either of these words, its true meaning would have been apparent, and the only obscurity there is about it is with the English reader. A few passages where it occurs will give you a clear view of its use in the Scriptures. Jacob said, concerning Joseph, "I will go down to the *grave* to my son mourning."—Judah, making his speech for the liberty of Benjamin, says, "Thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave." Job exclaimed, "Oh! that thou wouldst hide me in the grave." David says, "My life draweth nigh unto the grave." "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth." "Like sheep they are laid in the grave." Now in all these instances the same word is used that occurs in the text; but it is translated grave, and had it been so translated in this instance, it would hardly have been quoted in proof of endless misery. That it has no reference to a place of future torments is evident from a moment's reflection. Jacob did not intend to say

that he would go down to a place of endless torment to his son mourning. Nor did Job pray that God would hide him in such a place. Neither did David intend to say, that the bones of the people were laid at the mouth of that place. But they all expected to go to sheol, the very hell named in our text, be that what it may.

I may remark, however, that this word is used figuratively to denote seasons of darkness and distress. Thus David says, "The pains of hell gat hold upon me." And again, "Great is thy mercy towards me, O Lord, because thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." Now it is evident that David had not been in the grave, nor yet in a place of future torment; yet he had been delivered from sheol, and this is an instance in which we must understand the word figuratively to denote temporal sufferings, or seasons of calamity.

It is not necessary, however, to consume time in an elaborate discussion of this word. The matter is plain and simple thus far. I aver that the literal meaning of the term sheol is, "the grave, or state of the dead." And I say further, that this is a well settled truth, that no well informed man ever thinks of disputing. Though the popular clergy, from the force of habit, or some other cause, continue to quote the text in proof of endless torment, yet they know as well as I do, that this word means "the grave, or the state of the dead," no more or less; and there is not a man of them that

dare risk his reputation in an attempt to deny or controvert that fact. So it is written in the books of all denominations, and no commentator of any note has denied it. Dr. Campbell says, "Sheol signifies the state of the dead in general, without regard to the goodness or badness of the persons, their happiness or misery." Dr. Allen says, "The term (sheol) itself does not seem to mean anything more than the state of the dead, in their deep abode." Dr. Whitby says, "Sheol, throughout the Old Testament, signifies, not a place of punishment, for the souls of bad men only, but the grave, or place of death." Chapman, as quoted by Balfour, says, "Sheol in itself considered, has no connexion with future punishment." Now these are sound orthodox authorities, thorough going believers in the doctrine of endless misery, every one. But they were honest enough to speak the truth, which no man can or will deny.

And this is the word that is translated "hell" in our text. What does it mean there? I answer, it means just what it does in other places, "the grave, or state of the dead." The Psalmist was treating of the truth that evil deeds generally involve those who peform them, in their evil consequences. He says, "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made. In the net that they hid is their own feet taken. The Lord is known by the judgments that he executeth; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. The wicked shall be

turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." The whole train of thought shows most clearly, that the text was simply intended to teach that the wicked, caught in the very snares set by their own hands, would be turned into sheol, the grave, or state of the dead.

The word rendered "turned" generally means, to "turn back," usually, to turn or be driven suddenly back, without having accomplished the purpose intended. Now let us look and see if it is not true that the wicked, and all the nations that forget God, are snared in their own works, and driven or turned suddenly, prematurely into the grave, or state of the dead?

1. Let us view it as it regards nations.

The Jews were once a powerful and prosperous people. To them were committed the oracles of the living God, the covenants and the giving of the law. Their proud temple stood at Jerusalem, at once the glory of the nation and the wonder of the world; and while they trusted in God, his arm was made bare in their defence, and he gave them the victory. But they forgot God, and where are they now? Alas! they are gone. "The sceptre has departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet." They are scattered among the nations of the earth. Their temple is mouldering in dust, and its gold is carried away. Where now is Greece? Once she was the emporium of science and the light of the world. The arts flourished

under her care, and her heroes and statesmen, her poets and orators raised the admiration and excited the emulation of the world. Once the eloquence of a Demosthenese poured forth in the Legislative halls of Greece, could exert an influence that would shake the habitable earth. But her laurels are faded, and her head is low. The dark raven broods in her desolated halls, and the sculptured marble that bore the impress of her art is commingling with its native dust. Tell me, yè sages that record the changes of the past, why is this? What power was that which caused the glory and beauty of Greece to fade as the evanescent beam that flits across the horizon when a transient meteor falls? The answer is, she forgot God; and as you pore over her history there comes up a voice from the sepulchres of her heroes and sages, saying, that her ruin was owing to no other cause than the wickedness of her people.

You have heard of Rome, proud imperial Rome, who once ruled the world. She had by the force of her arms subdued the nations around her, and humbled the pride of kings until her treasury was filled with the gold that they paid as the price of her friendship. She too had her heroes and statesmen, and poets, and orators, whose names are written on the highest niche in the temple of fame. Time was when all the kings of the earth trembled at the neighing of the war steed of one of her Cæsars. Time was when a Cicero could thunder

in a Roman senate, to the decision of the fate of nations, and to the sealing of the destinies of the four quarters of the globe. But Rome forgot God, and robber as she was, she fell. Where now the might of her Cæsars? Where the long steel-girt hosts, who followed her eagles to conquest and glory? Alas! the crown has fallen from her head and left it naked and bare. The arm that held the sceptre is paralized and cold, and the sceptre itself is changed to the small dust of the balance. The tongues of her orators are silent. Her heroes sleep together in the grave, and from all the myriads that wielded her arms, not the twang of a bow string is heard. She forgot God, and her wickedness turned her into the grave, and her fate should be a warning to the nations of the earth, teaching that virtue alone is the rock of defence, the only sure safeguard against national death and a political grave.

Where now are Tyre, and Sidon, and Thebes, and Babylon, that once lifted their proud domes to the skies? They have gone down to the grave and are sleeping in dreamless silence there. The bittern and the owl screech in their palace, and the eagle makes her nest in their ivy walls. Why are they not now blooming as in ancient days? The story is short. They were wicked, and they died. Revelling in the glory of their strength, and rioting in luxury and excess, they forgot God and were driven into the grave. I ask, then, is it not true that the wicked and all the nations that forget God,

shall be turned into the grave? Thus much for the national aspect of the case.

2. I proceed to consider the subject as it relates to individuals:

I trust my hearers have not lived so long in the world without learning that the natural tendency, and the legitimate effect of all wickedness, is to shorten human life and hurry men into the grave. The Scriptures all along, present long life as the reward of virtue. Length of days is in the right hand of wisdom; and of him that heeds God's law, it is said, "With long life will I satisfy him." On the other hand, the word is that the wicked shall not live out half their days. They shall be cut off in the midst of life, and be snared in the works of their own hands. This same lesson is taught in the text, "they shall be driven, turned suddenly into sheol, the grave or state of the dead."

Do you wish for illustrations and proof of this truth? Behold Haman hanging upon the gallows that he built for Mordecai, the Jew. See an ungrateful Absalom on the tree, in the morning of life, and in the bloom of his health and strength. And is it not true that their own wickedness brought them to this untimely end?

These are but instances that illustrate a great truth, a general principle. Its workings here may be more outward and visible, but they are not more certain or sure. There is not one of all the dark catalogue of crimes that darkens the pages of this

world's polluted history, the tendency of which is not to shorten human life, and bring man earlier to his grave. God has so constituted man, that sin is a violation of the laws of his nature, on the healthful operation of which his life depends; and every sin he commits, bears like an incubus upon him, and the accumulated weight that bears heavily upon the constant transgressor, will as certainly crush him into the grave, as there is truth in the experience of man.

Is not the drunkard whirling with fearful haste down to the grave, and at every step, accelerating his speed by his sin? The graves are green around us, and from the mouldering sepulchres of the dead, there comes up a voice echoing the sentiment of the text: "The wicked shall be driven into the grave." He that gives loose reins to his passions, is in a constant fever, and there is a connexion between the state of the mind and health of the body, so intimate, that not one hurtful passion can be indulged without detriment to the powers of life. Such is the law of nature, and such is the sentiment of the text.

It is very true that, sooner or later, all must go to the grave. But to live a life of sin and misery, and in the midst of years to be cut off by violence, or swing from a gibbet, is one thing. But to live in peace and joy, to a good old age, and then to be gathered to our father's, like a shock of corn fully ripe, with the blessings of children's children upon

our heads, is another thing. And I imagine there is some slight difference between the two. I know not how you may feel, but for me, I say: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

But another objector says: I do not see, after all, that it makes much difference; for according to the Universalist doctrine, the man who is cut off in the midst of life, only gets to heaven a little sooner on that account.

Well, let us see how you are willing to test your objection by experiment. You are a Christian, and have no doubt that, should you die now, you would go immediately to heaven; whereas, if you live, you may fall away and be lost. Now suppose we arrest you for murder, and cast you into prison, and finally hang you. It will not make much difference, you know. You will only get to heaven a little sooner; that is all. What say you? would you like to travel that road to heaven? Ah! you say, you are innocent of crime, and would not like to suffer in that way. Very well. If these things would be sore evils to *you*, when supported by a consciousness of innocence, what are they to the man who, in addition to the miseries of the prison and the prospect of the gallows, is crushed with a damning sense of *guilt*, and haunted at noon-day, and in the silence of the dark night, with the voice of blood, coming like Banquo's ghost, that "will not down," and howls in his ears for vengeance?

Is his mind at ease? And does his dying bed feel "soft as downy pillows are"?

Let me illustrate a little further: A few years ago, a certain preacher by the name of Avery, was arrested and tried for murder, in one of our northern States. Many, very many, thought him guilty. Whether he was or not, God only knows. But I well remember, that the mass of the denomination to which he was attached, thought him innocent, and made all possible efforts to obtain his acquittal, in which they were successful. Now, why did they not act up to the spirit of this objection, which they so often bring against us, and say: We believe Br. Avery to be innocent, and a good Christian; but then we have no objection to his being hung; he will only get to heaven a little sooner, for he will swing from the gallows "right into paradise!"

I regret the necessity of using such plainness; but it is necessary to teach people, that when their own houses are of glass, they should be cautious about casting stones at the windows of their neighbors. The truth is, life is a blessing to which all men cling with tenacity; and to be cut off in the midst of life and consigned to an untimely grave, is an evil from which nature shrinks with all her powers. And this is the doom that the text denounces upon the wicked.

3. The term "sheol" is sometimes used figuratively, to denote suffering and misery, here in time.

If you understand the text in this light, it is true. David, who is its author, knew from his own bitter experience, that the wicked were turned into hell, for he had been there himself. "Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell," is his language. What was that hell from which he had been delivered? I answer, trouble of mind and anguish of spirit that came upon him for his crimes. Fearful forebodings of the future, and horrible recollections of the past, came over him, and filled his soul with the sorrows of death. The thought of the dark deed of which he had been the guilty perpetrator, came upon him; and when Nathan said to him, "thou art the man," then he was in hell; and he praised God that he had delivered him from this lowest hell. Into such a hell as this all the wicked are turned. Men may talk of the pleasures of sin as they will, there is no truth in it; for "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." The guilty man becomes his own tormentor; and go where he will, he carries with him the consciousness of his own guilt. He may flee to the ends of the earth, and he will carry it with him. He may dig to its very centre, and seek to bury his crime there; but from the darkness of its tomb it will come up and scourge him with a thong that no fortitude can endure. Into this hell every wicked man is turned.

I have now done with the exposition of the text, and it only remains to disabuse your minds of any

erroneous impressions that you may have from its common and popular acceptation.

Often as you hear this passage quoted in the popular preaching of the day, it is a singular fact, that those who quote most, do not themselves believe it; and for this cause, I have made it a principal object of my discourse, to prove it true, literally, and in all its applications. I have said, that, those who quote the text most often, do not believe it; and this remark may need an explanation. The minister in the pulpit quotes it: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," and contends that here is proof positive of endless misery. Now let us question him a little, and see if he believes it. Who are the wicked? How many of the human family have sinned? Dare you deny that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God? Are you prepared to join issue with the Scriptures, when they assert, that there is "no man that liveth that sinneth not;" that "the Lord looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand and seek God, and behold they had all gone out of the way, and there was none that did good—no, not one!" If you are not prepared to deny this, then I affirm, that there is not a son or a daughter of Adam, that has not sinned, and I charge that without exception, they are wicked. Does that preacher believe they will all be turned into hell? Nay, for he expects that multitudes will escape. Then

he does not believe the text, as he understands it.

But I must come nearer home, for men are slow of apprehension on this subject. I take the Rev. preacher, himself, and I ask: Sir, are you, or have you ever been, a wicked man? Oh! yes, says he, at a former period of my life, I was a vile sinner. Well sir, as you have been a wicked man, upon your own confession, allow me to ask whether you have been turned into hell. Oh! no, hell is not in this world, but in the next. I have never been turned into hell, and I hope to escape it. But how is this, my good sir? The text says, "the wicked shall be turned into hell." But you say you have been wicked, and yet you have not been turned into hell, nor do you believe you ever shall be. It is clear as sunlight that you do not believe the text. But, says he, I have repented. And suppose you have; what of that? Will your repentance make God Almighty a liar, or cause him to fail of fulfilling his word? I beg you adjust your glasses, and look at that text again. It does not say the wicked shall be turned into hell, unless *they repent.* But the language is plain and positive. The wicked *shall be* turned into hell, and *all* the nations that forget God. Now, you confess you have been wicked, and say you have not been turned into hell. I will leave you to explain that hell as you please, only remember that whatever it is, whether in this world or the next, you must yourself have a part in it, with other wicked people. And thus is the

verse preceding our text proved true: "In the net which they hid, is their own foot taken." You may make as many covenants with death, and agreements with hell, as you please. The word is, "they shall not stand," for the overflowing scourge shall pass by, and the hail shall sweep them away. Explain the text as you please, but do not forget, that "with what mete ye measure, it shall be measured unto you again," and be assured that God will not alter his government to suit your case, but he will treat you just as he treats other wicked people—turn them into hell for their wickedness. If that hell is a place of endless torment in another world, then you must be content to share its pains with those upon whom you denounce them.

There is one idea more to which I wish to direct your attention, and I shall have done. It is, that under any construction of the passage, it affords no proof of *endless* suffering. There is no word said of its duration, nor is there any hint from which we have a right to presume that it will be endless. On the contrary, there is no truth more clearly taught, in the Scriptures, than the destruction of this hell, or sheol. "Oh! death, I will be thy plagues. Oh! grave, (sheol) I will be thy destruction." The common idea, that there can be no deliverance from hell, has no support from Scripture. But the promise is: "I will redeem them from death. I will ransom them from the grave, (sheol)." So it is clear that whatever construction

you may put upon the term "sheol," or "hell," in the text, it affords no countenance whatever to the doctrine of endless torments; because the place itself is to be destroyed, utterly destroyed; and God himself has promised that he will ransom from its power.

The great moral lesson taught in the text, and which I desire my hearers to carry away with them, is, that no man can sin with impunity.

The great misfortune is, that while many are willing to preach, and do preach endless torments for others, yet no man has any idea of suffering himself. While he turns others into hell without stint or mercy, he has no notion of being turned in there himself. He has a convenient mode of escape, and though he may sin with a high hand, yet he intends to evade the punishment. I tell you of a truth, my hearers, all such hopes are vain. God has made no cruel or unmerciful denunciations, on the one hand; nor on the other has he made idle threats that he never intends to execute. What he hath spoken, that will he do. And though he smite in the equity of judgment, he is a friend and Father still, and all his punishments designed for good. And though he turn the wicked into the grave, he will redeem them from its power, and raise them to life and to glory at last, and to his great name be all the glory, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, in the world without end."

SERMON VIII.

BLASPHEMY.

"Verily I say unto you, all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness; but is in danger of eternal damnation." Mark iii. 28, 29.

Any person who will examine the reports of the various Lunatic Asylums of our country, for the last twenty years, may find as a prominent cause of insanity, "religious melancholy," as it is called. I have not now at hand statistics, so that I can give you the precise numbers; but I state the general fact, at which I have arrived by my former and careful investigations of this subject. The fact is this, "*More insanity has been produced by this than by any other cause, not excepting even the demon intemperance itself.*" I pray you, my hearers, on the very threshhold of this lecture, to pause and reflect one moment upon that startling truth. The religion of Jesus Christ is called the "Glorious gospel of the blessed God," and the first sound of its trumpet was, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people." At that glad signal the long bright host,

that surrounded the throne of the Eternal, and bent in silence to hear the message delivered, plumed their golden wings, and in the new born raptures of their spirits shouted, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men."

When the Savior preached, the people "wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." When Phillip went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them, the raving maniacs heard the word, and were made whole, "and there was great joy in that city." Such was the gospel and its effects in ancient times. But alas! the scene has changed, and we must now understand that this same gospel, which made earth vocal with joy, and caused heaven's high arches to ring with rapturous hosannas, has within the last twenty years, made more maniacs than all the grog shops and tippling houses in the United States! Is it any wonder that there are infidels in the world, so long as the gospel is presented in that light? Or am I to be censured for lifting my voice, to wipe this foul stain from the fair face of the Son of man?

But what has all this to do with the text? I answer, it has much to do with it. This "religious melancholy" almost uniformly proceeds from a belief on the part of the individual, that he or she has committed the "*unpardonable sin*," as it is called; and this doctrine of an "unpardonable sin," which lies at the bottom of so much mischief, is founded exclusively upon the text. The uniform

language of the Bible is, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be like crimson they shall be as wool." And besides this text, (and its parallel in Matt. xii. 31, 32,) I am not aware that there is another passage which is claimed as proof of the doctrine of an unpardonable sin. I pray you, therefore, grant me your attention, while I examine whether this text is good authority for proclaiming a doctrine whose every step is marked with the gloom of despair, and the wild ravings of insanity.

What is the unpardonable sin? Or rather, what is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? for there is no such language as "unpardonable sin" in the Bible.

Various opinions have prevailed upon this subject. Some have thought, that those who have been converted after the modern fashion, and then fallen back into the belief that their conversion was a delusion, are guilty of this sin. Others suppose they are guilty of it, who deny the influences of the Holy Ghost in modern revivals. But after all, there can scarcely be said to be any general, clear and definite ideas, as to the *precise nature* of this sin. While it is agreed, that there is a sin that can not, on any account, be pardoned, yet few profess to know precisely in what it consists. It appears to me, however, that there is nothing plainer than the true answer to the question we are now considering.

Look, for one moment, at the connexion of the text, and you cannot fail of seeing the true nature of this offence. It seems that Christ had wrought several notable miracles, the evidence of which was so plain and palpable, that his most bitter enemies could not deny that the miracles were actually performed. But the scribes, in order to evade the force of the argument, thus presented, and prevent the people from believing on him, endeavored to persuade them, that although there was no longer room to doubt, that the miracles were actually performed, yet, they were not wrought by the spirit of God, but by the aid of the devil. They said, therefore, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casts he out devils." In reply to this the Savior showed, that Satan would not be likely to be destroying his own kingdom. "If a kingdom be divided against itself it cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself it cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself he cannot stand." He then spake to them the language of the text, to which the evangelist adds, "Because they said he hath an unclean spirit." You here see that he spake to them of the sin against the Holy Ghost, "because they said he hath an unclean spirit;" and this was the precise sin that he intended to rebuke, under the name of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

It should be remembered, that this sin, exhibited on the part of the scribes, not merely blindness

and bigotry, but inveterate malignity. It was not an *ignorant denial* of Christ, but it was a sin against light and knowledge. They saw the miracles, and knew that they were performed, and yet, rather than admit what they well knew to be true, they persisted in their unbelief, and sought to cloak its absurdity under the plea, that Jesus wrought his miracles by the agency of Satan. Inasmuch therefore, as this sin derived its peculiar malignity from the circumstance, that the scribes, who committed it, knew that the miracles were performed, it follows, that none but those who lived in the age of miracles can be guilty of this sin. A man may now, indeed, deny the miracles, as some do; but he cannot deny them against such evidence as they had who saw them; and, comparatively speaking, it will be the sin of ignorance, and can not properly be considered the sin to which the text alludes.

With the views thus submitted the celebrated Methodist commentator, Dr. Adam Clarke, fully coincides. I quote him from memory, and am not positive that I give his precise words, but the substance only.

He says, "It is plain that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, or the unpardonable sin, as some call it, consists in wilfully ascribing the miracles which Christ wrought by the power of God, to a diabolical agency, by those who knew that they had been wrought. It cannot, therefore, be committed by any but those who lived in the age of

miracles. Therefore, let no man's heart fail him because of it, from henceforth and forever." Thus much for Dr. Clarke.

Let the hearer remember, then, that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost consisted in ascribing the miracles of Christ to the agency of the devil, by those who saw them performed; and that it can be committed only by those who lived in the age of miracles.

We pass now to inquire, what is meant by forgiving sin? We hear much of the forgiveness of sin, and many are saying their sins are forgiven. But it is not certain in my mind, that the real doctrine of forgiveness is well understood. The prevailing opinion is, that the forgiveness of sin is the remission of punishment; and hence, when it is said a sin shall not be forgiven, the idea is, that it shall *certainly* be punished.

Now the truth is, "all sin must be punished." God "will by no means clear the guilty," and "he that doeth wrong shall receive of the Lord for the wrong that he hath done," is the constant testimony of the Scripture. It is doubtless true, that the man who is guilty of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall be punished; but it is no more true of this than of any other sin, for "though hand joined in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished."

Besides, this view of forgiveness makes the Savior promise impunity to all sins, but this. His language, in the text, is plain and positive. "All

sins *shall* be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies, wherewith soever they shall blaspheme." Are we to understand by this, that man shall not be punished for any sin or blasphemy? Did the Savior intend to teach that they might riot in all manner of sins and blasphemies, and go unpunished, so that they kept clear of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? Nay, but the fact is, the true Bible doctrine of forgiveness has no reference to the remission of punishment. It is the forgiveness or remission of *sin itself*, not of punishment. It refers to the *transgression* of the law, not to its *penalty*, and is perfectly consistent with full and adequate punishment. In fact, punishment is often the means of forgiveness. You will understand this remark when I say, that the word rendered forgiveness, means "to dismiss," to "send away." But to dismiss or send away what? I answer, not punishment, but SIN; for I repeat, the Bible talks always of the forgiveness of *sin*, not of punishment.

Take an instance or two. The Lord proclaimed himself to Moses as "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Here you have it plainly, that although God will forgive (or take away) iniquity, transgression and sin, yet he will by no means clear the guilty. So the prophet says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith

your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, and her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Here you perceive the declaration is, that the iniquity of the people was pardoned, (that is, taken away) and for the very reason, that they had been punished for all their sins, and this precisely because the punishment, instead of being opposed to the idea of forgiveness, was the very means by which their sins were "taken away" or forgiven.

So John said, of Christ, "Behold the Lamb of God, that *taketh away* the *sin* of the world." The word here rendered "taketh away," is the same frequently translated "forgive," and you will observe that it is the *sin*, not the punishment of the world, that is taken away. So all along, in the Scriptures, we read of "remission," "blotting out," "washing away," "taking away," and forgiving *sin*, and all these are synonymous terms; and *always*, it is the *sin*, not the *punishment*, that is remitted or blotted out.

The truth is, God's laws are, in the moral, as in the physical world, uniform and immutable; and their penalties as sure and unerring as the decrees of fate. Not one of them, even the least, can by any possibility be violated with impunity. Neither repentance nor forgiveness, nor any thing else can save the transgressor from the punishment of his sins. God has not annexed a penalty to his laws,

as a mere bugbear to frighten men, and to be remitted on every pretence. His penalties are all merciful, and designed for good, and it were weakness to remit them.

If a man ruins his constitution by intemperance, or debauchery, he will suffer for it. He may repent, after the most approved fashion, and be forgiven as he may; but that will not save him from the punishment of past sin. On the contrary, he will carry the effects of his crime with him to the day of his death. Do you ask, then, what repentance or forgiveness can do for him? I answer, take away his sin of intemperance, and make him a sober, temperate man; this is forgiveness; and it is often brought about by punishment, precisely as a disease is taken away by medicine.

If these views are correct, you will see that the Savior was not here promising impunity to some sins, and threatening this alone with punishment. But the meaning of the text, thus far, may be given as follows: "All sins and blasphemies, wherewith men shall blaspheme, shall be forgiven, or "taken away," but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, hath not a removal or remedy, but is in danger of eternal damnation.

But why could not this sin be taken away as well as any other? Those who have paid particular attention to the remarks offered, on the nature of this sin, will see the proper answer to this question at a glance. The sin consisted in attributing the

miracles of the Savior to the agency of Satan, on the part of those who saw and knew that they were wrought.

Now, you will remember, that our Lord all along appealed to those miraculous works as the proof of the divine authenticity of his mission. When the unbelieving Jews asked for evidence of the claim he made to the Messiahship, he pointed to these miracles, and said, "Believe me for my work's sake." When John sent to know if he was the Messiah, his answer was: "Go and tell John again these things that ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight; the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." These were the works to which he always appealed, as sufficient of themselves to stamp the seal of divinity upon his mission. Now, when a man had seen these works, and still refused to believe, he had rejected the last and highest evidence, and there was no hope of his conversion.

A man might, in the ordinary sense of the term, be a blasphemer of God's name, and another might denounce the Savior as an arrant impostor; or, like Saul of Tarsus, be exceedingly mad against him, and yet, when they should come to see the wonders wrought by him of Nazareth, they might be convinced, and their sin be removed. But when a man stood by and saw the miracles; when he

saw the lame walk, the deaf hear, and even the dead raised to life, at a word, and yet, instead of being convinced, obstinately persisted in ascribing these works to the devil, it was a sin; not against the Savior only, but a blasphemy against that Holy Spirit by whose power the dead were raised; and that, too, in the face of light and knowledge, which showed clearly, that no argument could reach him, no evidence remove his sin of unbelief.

Hence, Matthew records the passage thus:— "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come."

A man might speak against the Savior, ignorantly, and yet, when he saw his works, his sin might be removed; but he that saw these mighty works, and yet blasphemed the power by which they were wrought, was beyond all hope of repentance or conversion. He had rejected the highest possible evidence, and there was no hope for him, but that he would continue in his sin and unbelief.

You now see the reason *why* this sin should not be taken away. We now proceed to inquire how long it should remain, or *when* it had not forgiveness? The text reads that it hath *never* forgiveness. Strong as this language may appear, and clearly as it may seem to close the door of hope to all eternity against those who were guilty of this

sin, yet a more critical examination may place the matter in a different light.

The phraseology of the text is somewhat peculiar. It does not read that their sin "*shall* never have forgiveness," but it is, "it HATH never forgiveness," and it should therefore be regarded as a strong and emphatic declaration of the *then* present impossibility of removing this sin, rather than as a prophecy of the future condition of those who committed it. It *hath* never forgiveness; that is, it hath *never* happened, in any *instance*, that a man who has committed this sin, has been converted.

That there is no propriety in extending this through all time and eternity, is evident from the consideration that this sin could only be committed in an age of miracles; and hence, of course, there would soon be no such sin to forgive, or take away, for it would die of itself.

Matthew, however, says in his record of the passage: "It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Upon this, I remark, that the word here rendered "world," means no more than "age, or dispensation," as is well known to every scholar. It is the same world to which the apostle alludes when he says: "Now, once in the end of *this world* hath Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Dr. Adam Clark, in his comment upon the text, says: "I follow the common translation (in rendering "this world, and and the world to come,")

yet, I am fully satisfied, that the meaning is, neither in this dispensation, viz: the Jewish: nor in that which is to come—the Christian." So, then, the text teaches, that neither under the Jewish dispensation, or under the Christian; or perhaps still more strictly, neither in the age of Christ's personal ministry, nor in the apostolic age, when miracles were wrought, was there any hope of taking away the sin of unbelief from a man, who had withstood the evidence of his own senses, and blasphemed the power that wrought these wonders, by ascribing them to the agency of the devil. All other sins might be taken away, but this was incurable by any amount of evidence.

It remains now, to speak of the danger to which it exposed the man who was guilty. He is, says the text, in danger of "eternal damnation." The common opinion is, that this alludes to a state of endless suffering in the future world. But if this be so, it is difficult to perceive why those who are guilty of the sin of blasphemy, should be in danger of it, *peculiarly*. Are those who are guilty of this sin, the only persons who are in danger of endless misery, and is there danger to none else? Verily, this would be narrowing down the limits of the danger far below the ordinary standard. Have we not all along been taught, that we are all of us, every day, and every hour, in danger of falling into these interminable torments? And doth not the catechism say: "All mankind by the fall lost

communion with God, fell under his wrath and curse, and so, became liable to all the miseries of this life, death itself, and the pains of hell forever"? And is this all false? And is it indeed true, that none are in danger, but those few who commit the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? If it be not so, then where the force or point of the text? You would make the Savior say: All sins and blasphemies wherewith soever men shall blaspheme, shall be forgiven them; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger— of what? any thing new? Nay, but of that same hell torment, to which all mankind were made liable, by the sin of Adam, four thousand years before, and of which every soul of man had been in danger!! One would really suppose that there ought to be more point and pith in the text than this, and it will be seen in the sequel, that the sin being peculiar, had its appropriate punishment.

It is worthy of remark, that this is the only place in the Bible where the phrase "eternal damnation" occurs; and also that none of the evangelists, except Mark, in recording this part of the Savior's teachings, have used this phrase, or any thing that could be so translated: a very important omission on their part, if it means, as is supposed, interminable hell torments.

It may be said, further, that there are few phrases in the New Testament which have been so various-

ly translated as this. This may be accounted for by the fact, that the original Greek is not the same in all copies. Many of them, and those of great authority, have instead of "kriseos," punishment, "condemnation" or "damnation," another word which means *sin* or *trespass*. This version has been adopted by eminent translators; and instead of "eternal damnation," they read, "everlasting sinning." As the old English version reads, instead of "eternal damnation," "everlasting trespass." Which of these words were employed by the evangelist, it is perhaps impossible, at this day, to determine. Nor is it very material, for either of them, correctly understood, will preserve the harmony of the sentiment through the entire passage.

I must offer a few remarks upon the word "*eternal*," in the text, and then I will give you what I suppose to be its true import. I have already said, that the word here translated "*world*," means no more or less than age or dispensation. This is an admitted point, and what I wish to impress upon your minds *now*, is that the word rendered "eternal," is precisely the same word in another form; that is, it is the "adjective" of the "noun." The noun is "aion," the adjective, "aionion;" the noun meaning age, and the adjective "age lasting," or, as some say, partaking of the nature or character of the age, without any particular reference to duration.

The *noun*, as I said, and as all critics and com-

mentators agree, means "age, or dispensation," and by no rule can you make an adjective mean more than the noun from which it is derived. Dismiss, therefore, from your minds the idea of endless duration as necessarily attached to this word. I say distinctly, and fear no contradiction, when I say, it means no such thing.

Now let us go back and take up our exposition where we left it, and see how it will harmonize. The scribes saw the miracles, and knew that they were performed, but ascribed them to the agency of the devil. In this, they were guilty of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; they thus rejected the highest evidence, and exhibited a perversity of spirit which left no hope of their conversion. Our Savior told them that all other sins might be taken away, but this should not be taken away; but was in danger of "age-lasting condemnation," or better still, of the "condemnation of the age." And what was the condemnation of the age? Do you not know that judgments had been denounced against that people by the mouth of the prophets, that should sweep them from the face of the earth? And did not the Savior say, that all the righteous blood that had been shed upon the earth, should be required of that generation? the holy city should be destroyed, so that not one stone should be left upon another, and except the days were shortened, no flesh should be spared? This was the condemnation of that evil and adulterous generation, from

which the Savior promised safety to all those that believed on him, and whose sins should be blotted out. And it is easy to see how "this sin of blasphemy," of the removal of which there was no hope, exposed the scribes to this punishment or condemnation.

Or, if you adopt the version of a good many authorities, and read "sin," instead of "damnation," it is easy to see how the man who had spoken against the Holy Ghost, by ascribing the miracles to the agency of Satan, and thus cut off all hope of his conversion to Christianity, was in danger of continuing in sin and hardness of heart all the days of his life; or as the old English version has it, "in danger of perpetual trespass."—Thus you see a perfect harmony pervading the whole passage, and can appreciate the reasons for the whole. It is no longer a mere arbitrary saying, having no foundation, but in whim or caprice, but it is a truth that exists in the reason and nature of things.

Allow me briefly to recapitulate the ground we have gone over, so that you may carry away with you a small synopsis of the discourse.

We have seen, that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost consisted in ascribing the miracles of Christ to the agency of Satan, by those who saw and knew that they were actually performed, and that it can, therefore, only be committed in an age of miracles.

We have seen, that to forgive sin, is to take it away, or *blot it out*, and not a remission of punishment. We have seen, that the reason why this sin could not be taken away, was, that those who committed it, expected the highest possible evidence, so that neither the Jewish, nor the Christian age or dispensation furnished an argument that would be likely to reach them. And finally, that the danger in their case was, that they would continue obstinate in sin all the days of their lives, or fall under the terrible condemnation that was out against that evil and wicked age.

And here I would leave the subject with you, were it not that some hearer may feel disposed to push his inquiries further, and ask what became of those wicked men who were guilty of this sin? I answer, in them the intimation of the text was fulfilled. Their sin was not taken away; but in the face of yet more stupendous miracles, they continued to defy all the influences and arguments of truth, until the day long foretold by the prophets came upon them, and in all the accumulated horrors of the sword, famine and pestilence, they were swept from the face of the earth.

But, asks the objector again, what became of their spirits? I answer, in the language of the Scriptures: "The dust shall return to the earth as it was, but the *spirit* shall return to God that gave it. That is all I know about it. If any one knows any thing more or different from this, I

would fain ask whence he derived his information. For me, I leave them with God,—for well do I know, that there they are safer than they would be in your hands or mine.

I have learned, my hearers, to look with a hopeful eye, upon all the dark and apparently severe dispensations of divine providence, and to see bright bows of promise in every cloud that obscures the skies of earth.

I see these guilty men blaspheming the name of the Great God, persisting in their rebellion, until the besom of destruction sweeps them from the earth. Their sun goes down in clouds and thick darkness. But blessed be God, light dawns upon the darkness of their tomb, and hope whispers of a day, when they shall rise in the image of their Redeemer, and approximate the *divinity*, till they shall know and enjoy the God of all.

Away, ye doubters, all! Away! ye distrustful spirits, who live upon God's mercy every day, and yet spend your lives in seeking some word he has used, that shall justify you in "dealing damnation round the land, on each you judge a foe."

Away! ye ungrateful children of a Father's love, who in a spirit of unbelief akin to that which dictated the blasphemy of the text, forget the mercies of God, and construe every warning word as if it came from a fiend of darkness, well pleased if ye can get a pretext for damning a brother. Give me the grateful, confiding, trustful heart, that

relies with cheerful hope upon the God of all, and that puts the most merciful construction upon his every word, for that is always nearest truth.

I close with the full conviction that the text affords not the slightest evidence of endless torments, and in the language of Dr. Clarke, say :— "Let no man's heart fail because of it henceforth and forever."

SERMON IX.

THE SECOND DEATH.

"But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and the whoremongers, and sorcerers, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Rev xxi, 8.

This text contains a plain and positive assertion that certain characters, therein specified, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, together with an explanatory clause, informing us what is meant by the burning lake, "It is the second death." Relative to the question, whether the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, is to be understood literally or figuratively, I have little to say. During the dark ages it might have been necessary to discuss that question, but the day has passed when any man, claiming even a tolerable share of theological knowledge, would risk his reputation, as a man of sane mind, in an attempt to maintain the existence of a real lake of literal fire and brimstone, in which immortal and immaterial spirits are to be burned. It is a figure used to represent a reality, and this reality is the second death. I think it most likely that the figure was borrowed from the Old Testament Scriptures,

either from the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, or from the language of the prophet, in reference to the odious valley of the son of Hinnom, where he says, "The pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it." The question, however, is not upon the nature of this lake of fire and brimstone, but rather upon its location and duration.

The believer in the doctrine of endless misery contends that this lake is in another world, and that those who are cast into it must remain there through all eternity. There are others who admit that the lake is in another world; but, instead of keeping men there duration without end, would vary the length of punishment by the different degrees of guilt, which are attached to different persons. Thus some may remain a few years only, while a notorious offender might suffer a thousand years, and by that time they would think he had received his part, and might be liberated. This certainly looks more like justice than the other view; and, though, I would not strongly object to the idea of a just and salutary punishment in the future state, yet, so far as this text is concerned, I feel bound to say, that, in my judgment, it countenances no such doctrine. I have great confidence that I shall be able to convince every candid mind, that this lake of fire and brimstone is in this word, and that such characters as are named in the text, do indeed, and in truth, have their part in it on earth.

The only reason I have ever heard offered for the opinion, that this lake of fire and brimstone is in the other world, is based upon the circumstance, that it is called the second death. Hence, it is argued, that it must relate to things that are to transpire after death. There is one fact, however, which seems to have escaped the notice of those who reason in this manner, which is: there are several kinds of death spoken of in the Scriptures. There is a natural death, and there is a moral and spiritual death. One thing is said to be second, in reference to another, and a similar thing which precedes it. Surely there may be a question whether this death is called second in reference to a moral death, or the death of the body. The argument, under consideration, assumes the position that it is called second in relation to the death of the body, and argues from that as from an established truth. It is, therefore, what logicians call a petitio principii, a begging of the very question in dispute. It ought, in the first place, to be proved that this death is second to the death of the body, and there will be time enough to make that position the basis of an argument. I doubt the position assumed, and for reasons that appear to me good and sufficient.

First of all, there is not the least imaginable analogy between the two things which are thought to be compared. The death of the body is an extinction of the animal life, and the complete destruction of sensation. But casting a man into a

lake, burning with fire and brimstone, is another and a very different thing. Instead of destroying life, it is said to perpetuate it to all eternity, and instead of putting an end to feeling, it heightens it to the greatest possible extent. There is, therefore, no analogy between the two, which should give them a name in common, and place them in the intimate relation of first and second. A man has a shock of palsy which partially, at least, destroys sensation. After a time he has an attack of the gout, a most excruciatingly painful disease, and as he writhes in his agony, he insists that it is a second attack of palsy. Does not the child see the impropriety of thus associating things so dissimilar? And yet you would have us believe that the Scriptures are guilty of this absurdity in a still more glaring form. A man dies, and is left a cold and lifeless lump of clay, without sensation or feeling. He is raised up from the dead, and cast into a burning furnace, there to live and suffer the keenest agony as long as God exists, and this you call a second death! It may be so, but surely it is not much like the first.

The truth is, this idea of the part in the lake, being called the "second death," instead of being an argument in favor of applying the passage to another world, is proof positive, that it belongs to the present, and precedes the death of the body. He that would correctly understand what is meant by the second death, must know what is the first.

When God had made man, and placed him in the garden, he directed his attention to the fruit of a certain tree, and said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Here a death is mentioned, and it is the first of which there is any account in Scripture or fact. It could not have been natural death, because it was to come on the day of transgression; and Adam did not die a natural death on that day. He ate the forbidden fruit, and if the word of the Lord was true, he suffered the first death, on that self-same day. And, now, if you can find what happened on that day, you will find how he died. He saw what he had done, and with his guilty partner in sin, he hid himself among the trees of the garden. And when God called after him, he said, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and was afraid." (The *fearful* have their part in the lake, which is the second death.)

Adam had died to innocence and joy, and found himself in that state, which the Scriptures denominate death. To be carnally minded is death. Here is the first death of which we read. It is a moral or spiritual death, and it has passed upon all men. Paul suffered this death, and by the same means as Adam. He says, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." So all men die. "The love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge, that if Christ died for all, then were all dead. Here, then, you have death passing upon all. It is

a moral death, and it is the first. And now for the argument, in relation to the time, when those named in the text are to have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone.

I have shown you that the first is a moral death. It came upon Adam on the day of transgression, and it has passed upon all men, for all men have sinned. It is, therefore, as evident as mathematical demonstration can make it, that this part in the burning lake might precede the death of the body, otherwise it cannot be the second death. If it does not come before natural death it will be the third, not the second. To be carnally minded is death. There is one death that all men suffer in this world. The death of the body is another. This part in the burning lake is another, and you may place it where you please, either before or after the death of the body. I beg leave to put it where the revelator has put it, the second on the list. If you choose to place it after the death of the body, and thus make it the third, instead of the second, you must settle the difference with the revelator, not with me.

I might go on and show that the characters here described are such as can exist only in the flesh, and that all we know of the resurrection state is opposed to the idea of their existence there. As for instance, Paul speaks of the resurrection as a state of "immortality, incorruption, and glory," and the Savior says, "In the resurrection they

neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God which are in heaven."

I might ask, with propriety, whether immortal beings can murder one another? Whether spiritual and incorruptible beings can be guilty of the vile sins set forth in the text? And whether it is likely that there will be adulterers in that land where they neither marry nor are given in marriage? And the answer to these questions would fix the application of the text to this corruptible earth, and to men who are encompassed with the lusts and infirmities of the flesh. But I will not dwell here. I only repeat what I have before said. The revelator has himself placed it in this world, by making it the second death, not the third, as it would be if it followed the death of the body, and by his decision I abide.

I now proceed to inquire, What is meant by having a part in this lake of fire and brimstone? The revelator answers, "it is the second death." And this provokes the question, what is the second death? The question is not without its difficulties, as no writer but John has used such a phrase. I have my opinion, however, and I will give it you as my opinion. You will examine it, and let it pass for what it is worth. If correct, it will be none the worse for having come from a Universalist; and if incorrect it would be good for nothing if it had come from a more orthodox source. To the omnipotence of truth all must sooner or

later bow, and the sooner we kneel at its shrine the better for us and the world.

I have before hinted at what I regard as a self-evident truth, that in order for one thing to be second properly to another thing of the same name; there should be some analogy between them. If there is a second death, there is, doubtless, a first, and propriety of language would lead us to expect them to be somewhat alike. I have shown you that the first is a moral death, and the principle above noted would indicate that the second is a moral death also.

Now let us pursue the subject a little further. The Scriptures all along contemplate all men as morally dead, until the life giving power of the gospel raises them to newness of life. Paul says, as before quoted, "If Christ died for all then were all dead." Here, then, you have the whole world morally, spiritually dead, and in that sense there was no life in them. Jesus said he came to give life to the world. He was the quickening spirit, sent forth that men might have life; the bread of God, that came down from heaven, to give life to the world. Accordingly he says, "He that believeth on me hath passed from death unto life." And so Paul says, "You hath he quickened who were dead." You perceive those who had suffered a moral death, and had been raised from it. The gospel came and found them dead in sin. They believed and passed from death unto life. Now,

suppose, after thus having been raised to life by faith, they had renounced that faith and become fearful and unbelieving, thus returning to their former state. They would have died a moral death, would they not? Certainly, and it would have been the second death of the kind that they had suffered, would it not? Most assuredly. Well, then, you have a second death, without the necessity of looking for it in the untried scenes of a future world.

There were some, in the days of Jude, who suffered this death. Speaking of those unbelieving souls who had turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denied the Lord that bought them, he says, "These are spots in your feasts of charity, clouds they are without water, driven about with winds, trees whose fruit withereth, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." *Twice* dead, did the apostle say? Ay, verily. Then they had suffered the second death. The gospel found them dead in sin. By its quickening energies it raised them to spiritual life. But now they rejected the gospel, denied the Lord that bought them, and were hurt of the second death. Such are my views of the second death, and of their correctness I entertain no manner of doubt.

The lake of fire and brimstone was a figure or emblem which John saw in vision, representing this apostacy from the faith of the gospel. Of the aptness of the figure I may be indulged in offering

a few words. It was not long after the departure of the last of the apostles, that the disciples of Christ began to manifest a fearful and unbelieving spirit. Many of them apostatized, and were hurt of the second death. Among the many errors that crept into the church was the idea of ceaseless torments in the world to come, to be endured in a lake of fire and brimstone. No sooner was this lake introduced and believed in as a real existence, instead of a figure, than men began to be tormented with it; and, from that day to this, there have been thousands of fearful and unbelieving souls who have had their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death, and in its faith they are tormented, even in the presence of God and the Lamb, day and night continually. It is observable that none are tormented in this lake but those that believe in it. It burns not me. Imagination may picture it forth in all its horrors, until the fearful and the unbelieving heart can see its lurid flames, and feel its inherent heat. But for me its flames are not hotter than moonshine; I can pass through it, and come out without the smell of fire upon my garments. I believe in God, and have no fears to trust myself in his hands for time and eternity. I repose a steadfast and unfaltering confidence in him, that forbids a doubt or fear; and for that reason the second death has no power to alarm. But, unfortunately, many, very many of those who are loudest in their professions of faith,

are still fearful and unbelieving. Talk not of infidel Turks and unbelieving Jews, but look at home, and you shall find the most obstinate spirit of unbeliet enshrined in the sanctuary of the Christian church, and the most dreadful of all fears not only indulged and countenanced, but nurtured and cherished by those who profess to be followers of Christ.

Go you to the house of worship where the main topic of discourse is the horrors of the burning lake, and mark what feelings are indulged there, and the efforts that are made to alarm the fears of the people, and then tell me if there are not many who are hurt of the second death. The preacher moves away the dark curtain that intervenes between time and eternity, and brings up to the vision of the people a picture of that awful sea of torment, whose billows. upheaved by the spirit of omnipotent wrath, roll on and lash its shores, "mixed with the damned like pebbles!" And all ages and conditions of men are there, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, children, friends, are torn from all that they hold dear and sacred, and plunged in that raging, boiling ocean of wo, there to howl with grim devils and infuriated fiends, through a long and never ending eternity. The people believe, and you shall see pale fear depicted on every countenance, and a whole congregation viewing themselves hair hung and breeze shaken over the awful lake, and God himself about to cut the last thread that they may fall to rise no more. Oh! what a scene ensues.

The timid faint, the weak shriek outright for fear. The mother trembles for her children, and even the aged veteran, who has stood with steady nerve in the midst of "war's alarms," now trembles like an aspen leaf, and all are agitated and miserable. And all this in the nineteenth century! In a land boasting of Christian light and knowledge! Yea, and in a Christian church too! A church dedicated to the proclamation of that gospel, the very first sound of whose trumpet caused the angels of heaven to shout aloud for joy, and hymn their hosannas of "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will to men!" But what the cause of these fears? Are they the result of an abiding and steadfast faith in the gospel of God's grace? Do they flow from the knowledge of God and his Son, or from faith in him? Nay, but they are the offspring of dark and dreadful apostacy; the result of unbelief of the most obstinate character, and show too plainly that the second death is in the world.

To those who, in spite of all the arguments I have offered, still insist that this second death is to be suffered in the future world, I have a few words to say. I desire to show such that it is a matter in which they have a very near personal interest. It probably does not occur to those who make use of the text, that their argument is suicidal, and will apply with as much force to themselves as to any single individual of the human family. Observe

the very plain and positive language of the text. It does not say that the characters there named are in danger of being cast into the lake of fire, and that they will be so dealt with, if they do not repent and conform to certain prescribed conditions of safety. But the expression is of the most positive and unequivocal character. "The fearful and unbelieving, &c., *shall* have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Now I will take the most rigid stickler for the future application of the passage, and I will ask him a simple question Were you ever or are you now fearful and unbelieving? Oh! yes, he will say. My unbelieving and wicked heart resisted all the overtures of grace and mercy for a long time, and when, at last, I was awakened to a true sense of my situation, I awfully feared that all was lost. Very well, you have, by your own showing, been both unbelieving and fearful, to say nothing of any other crimes here enumerated. And now will you inform us whether you have had your part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone? I affirm that the lake is here on earth, and that you have your part in it here. But if you say you have it not, why then, according to your own showing, you must have it in the future world. Talk as you will, the sober truth is, if you have been guilty of the sin you must suffer the punishment; and if that punishment is endless hell torments in another world, then you must share it with your fellow sin-

ners—yea, and with the whole human family, for there lives not a man upon the face of the earth who has not been guilty of some of these sins. I pray you think of these things, and when about to curse and consign your fellow creatures to ceaseless perdition on the authority of the text, have a care that you are not slain by the weapon raised to smite a brother.

I have now done with what I had to say upon the text, and I leave the subject with you, exhorting one and all to search and see if these things are so. For me I will hope in the Lord, and in the midst of all that would shroud his purposes in thick darkness and gloom, I will hold fast my faith in him, without a doubt or a fear. I will trust him in the day time, when the sun shines bright upon the beautious earth, and the birds sing their praises to his name. And in the night I will walk forth under the clear blue skies, and the moon and the stars that sparkle from their abode on high, shall nourish my faith and confidence in him. But should the earthquake come and shake the foundations of the world, and the "storm gather dark and thunder loud," I will still see some stars faintly glimmering through the clouds, some rays of light gleaming through the darkness, from that land where God resides, and all is calm and peaceful as the sunshine of yesterday. And should the storm darken and blacken above and around, until the last opening vista in heaven shall be closed, and

the last star shall be quenched in rayless night, even then I will stand with steadfast faith and heavenward eye, and by the fitful glare of the lightning's flash, I will catch the distant outline of the eternal hills beyond the flood—those hills which have stood through the storms of a thousand ages, and whose tall peaks are reared above the clouds as a beacon of hope to a dying world. And still will I trust in the Lord, for he is our God, and in him is our strength and salvation. Be ye not fearful, but believing, and rejoice in the Lord always.

SERMON X.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto them, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Luke xvi. 19....31.

This text is somewhat prominent among those passages of the New Testament, which are generally supposed to teach the doctrine of endless misery, in hell. To those who are already believers in the "great salvation," I can not expect to offer

any thing that will be new, or particularly interesting; for they are generally familiar with the exposition of this class of passages.

It should be remembered, however, that long habit has associated the doctrine of endless misery with these portions of the Scriptures in the minds of the people; and there are many, very many honest men who see, or think they see in them insuperable objections to the sentiment of universal salvations. For their sakes, it is therefore necessary that we should frequently attempt to remove these stumbling blocks from their path.

I omit all further introductory remarks, and will give the subject before us that careful and candid examination, which its importance seems to demand; and if, in the end, I shall fail of convincing you that my views of the passage are correct, and true, I trust you will have no occasion to complain of the spirit in which they have been presented.

I call your attention, first of all, to the remarkable fact, that no crime is alledged against the rich man, as the cause of his unhappy fate. For aught that would appear to the contrary, he was a benevolent and good man; The circumstance that the beggar was laid at the rich man's gate, indicates that he was permitted to be there, and to be fed. An eminent commentator translates the word rendered "desiring" by "delighting," so as to read, "delighting to be fed from the crumbs that fell

from the rich man's table." It was a boon which we have no authority for saying was denied him.

On the other hand, no virtue is ascribed to the beggar. He was poor, and for aught we know to the contrary, he came to his poverty by his crimes. If, therefore, the text is the criterion by which we are to decide the immortal destinies of our fellow creatures, it will oblige us to pronounce the sentence of endless condemnation on those who are rich, and indulge a hope of heaven only for beggars. But I pass this.

There are two opinions prevalent in regard to the proper construction to be put upon the text. One is, that it is a *literal history* of that which was true of the individuals in question, and may be true of others; and the other is, that it is a *parable*, and should be interpreted as such.

Our first business, then, will be to decide which of these opinions is true. And you will readily discover that this is the most important question at issue. If the text is a parable, then it will appear preposterous in the extreme to rely upon its literal phraseology, for proof of any doctrine, especially one so important as that of endless suffering. I shall therefore examine this question at length, and give you the arguments on both sides.

In favor of its literal construction, it is alledged, that the language is plain and positive, "There was a certain rich man," &c. It is further said, by way of application of the argument, that the sacred

writers were careful to inform their readers, when any part of the Savior's teachings was to be understood parabolically, by the introduction, "He spake unto them in parables," or, "Another parable put he forth unto them." Inasmuch, then, as there is no such preface to the text, but the language is plain and positive, "There was a certain rich man," it is thought we have as much reason for believing there was actually such a man as that there was such a man as David, or Solomon, or Moses. I believe I have stated the argument fully and fairly; and I reply,

First, that the argument is quite inconclusive, being based upon false premises. It is true that the evangelists did sometimes preface the parables, by informing their readers that Christ spake them as such. But this is not uniformly the fact. On the contrary, in the very chapter preceding our text we find the parable of the Prodigal Son without any such preface; which declares as plainly that, "A certain man had two sons," as does the text that "There was a certain rich man." And yet all agree that this is undoubtedly a parable. But if the omission of the preface is good evidence that our text is not a parable, then surely the same omission will prove that the account of the prodigal son, and several others, are no parables.

I remark, however, in the second place, that it is doubtful whether the evangelist himself omitted the preface. Dr. Gill, the most eminent commentator

of the Calvinistic Baptist sect, informs us that in the most ancient manuscript of Bezæ, it reads, "And another parable put he forth unto them," and he consequently explains it as a parable. Now this is either a correct copy of the original by Luke, or it is an interpolation. If it be correct, as found in the original, then of course it settles the question as to the manner of understanding the text. But even if it be an interpolation, it affords an argument in favor of the position that it is a parable. The manuscript of the gospel in which this reading is found, is one of the most ancient in existence. Its age is not known, but it is usually dated in the fourth century. If then the phrase, "Another parable put he forth unto them," is an interpolation, it must have been inserted as early as the third or fourth century; which proves, at that early period, it was clearly understood to be a parable.

I have now noticed the only argument that I have heard advanced in favor of the literal construction of the text; and I pass on, to give you the reasons that induce me to regard it as a parable.

The internal evidences are abundant; for there are in the text many things that no man in his senses can understand literally. It is said, for instance, that the beggar was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. It is worthy of your notice, that it was not the soul, but the beggar himself, that was thus carried to the bosom of Abraham.

And will any man in his senses contend, that this is to be understood in its literal sense? That holy angels came down and took that poor beggar, full of sores, and carried him and put him into the literal bosom of the patriarchal Abraham? He presumes not. Why then contend that the text should be understood in its literal sense? And why complain of us for understanding it figuratively when ye, yourselves are compelled to do the self-same thing?

Again, the individuals named are represented as being in possession of all their bodily organs.—They had eyes, and ears and tongues and organs of speech. What folly do we commit when we give to these a literal sense, and talk of the eyes and tongues of those who are really dead! Should it be contended that reference is had to the souls of these men, it does not mend the matter. Do souls have these organs? or is there any sense in saying that the tongue of an immortal spirit is parched, or the spirit itself is tormented in a literal flame?

Again, the parties are represented as conversing with one another from heaven to hell. How will this compare with the common notions of the locality of the two places? If the rich man was really in hell, and the beggar in heaven, according to the common view of the matter, it is evident, that the two places are much nearer together than people usually imagine. Otherwise they must be

able to converse at a much greater distance than we can, on earth. It is unfortunate for error that it cannot always appear in the same garb; but it will contradict at one time what it says at another. This remark is illustrated in the case before us. I have rarely seen a man who could tell a story about hell twice alike. Indeed, were it not for the grave and serious importance of the subject, I should sometimes feel disposed to smile, at the different and contradictory descriptions that are given of hell, by those who profess to know most upon the subject. Milton, who appears to have been more familiar with the topography and situation of the infernal regions than any man I ever read; represents hell as a vast number of leagues below heaven; so that when Satan was cast out, he fell through absolute non-entity during seven days, before he reached hell. It is certain also, that modern Christians are in the habit of describing heaven as situated at an immeasurable distance above hell.

But when the text happens to be in view, they are willing to place them about on an equal footing in point of altitude. They may now lay side by side, separted by a gulf, deep indeed, but so narrow that the inhabitants of one place can see all that is going on in the other. Sometimes we are informed, that the torments of hell will consist, in a great degree, in the exclusion from the society of the good, and in being obliged to hold converse

with demons, and the spirits of the damned. But when the text is in view, they can allow the inhabitants of hell to hold converse on very familiar terms, even with good old Abraham the Father of the faithful. Sometimes we are informed that men in hell will be cruel as fiends, and all their conversation will be but curses and blasphemies. But in view of the text, we can be told, that the spirit of benevolence was at work in the heart of the rich man, dictating most kind prayers; and that the rich man in hell felt a merciful interest in the welfare of others, that found not a response or an equal in heaven.

All these things serve to show how wide men will go of reason and consistency, when they attempt to describe things of which they are perfectly ignorant. And they should admonish a man, if he is determined to let his imagination run riot, at least to restrain his tongue; and if he will understand the text as a literal and matter of fact description of hell, let him, to use a common phrase, "stick to his text," and always tell the same story; otherwise he will expose himself to the suspicion, of being more anxious to support a favorite dogma than to know the truth.

The difficulties I have named are but a few out of the many that appear upon the face of the text itself, forbidding the idea that it is to be understood in a literal sense. If we turn to the context and to other external circumstances, we shall find evi-

dence still more clear and pertinent. The chapter commences with the parable of the unjust steward, in which the scribes and pharisees are reproached for not making such an improvement of the law as would introduce them into the gospel kingdom.—This reproof provoked their derision; and he said, "Ye are they that justify yourselves before men, but God honoreth your hearts, for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." The law and the prophets were until John, since that time the kingdom of God is preached." The hearer will observe that the subject of which the Savior is treating is the end of the law, and the introduction of the gospel. The scribes and pharisees adhered to the law, and derided Jesus. And this conduct, though in high repute among men, was an abomination in the sight of God. To illustrate this point, he introduces the parable of adultery, in which he represents the sin of the pharisees under the figure of that odious crime. And then comes the text, which is introduced precisely as if it belonged to the same subject, and without the least possible intimation of a change.

In all this context, there is nothing that would naturally lead the mind to a contemplation of such a sentiment as the text is supposed to teach. And it would appear to me totally inconsistent with the character of Christ as a divine teacher, to suppose, that when treating the subject of the end of the

law, and showing the pharisess their guilt in deriding him, he should abruptly leave the subject, and tell them a tale about a rich man and a beggar, having no connection with the matter in hand. It is far more reasonable to suppose, that he introduced the text as an illustration of his subject; and we shall see in the sequel that it was a truly appropriate illustration.

But after all there is one circumstance, which proves, beyond all controversy, that the text was a parable, and not a literal history of facts. I allude to the fact that it was not original with our Savior. The learned commentator, Dr. Whitby, informs us that this parable is found in the German Babylonica, a collection of fables and other matters brought from Babylon. It would surely redound little to the honor of Christ, to say that he incorporated into his system an old fable as an important item, though with the most perfect propriety he might repeat that fable as an illustration, and an enforcement of an important lesson that he wished to impress upon the minds of his hearers. I should be pleased to know from some one who contends for the literal construction of the text, where it first came to be a history of facts. It was a fable, and known as such for four hundred years before Christ, and how and when it was changed to a fragment of real history, and a prophecy of the fate of millions in another world, is a mystery that my poor head cannot fully comprehend.

I might give you other reasons for considering the text a parable; but these must suffice, and to me I confess they are irresistable. If, then, the text is a parable, its meaning must be sought under the figure, and its literal phraseology cannot properly be alledged in proof of any doctrine. A parable is one thing, and our explanations of the parable are another thing. We may, if we please, explain the parable of the text in such a manner as to favor the doctrine of endless misery, but then all the proof it will afford of the doctrine will rest upon the presumption that we have explained it right. That being a mere matter of opinion, upon which you and I may differ; of course the proof itself is no more than the opinion of a man, which, in religion, is no proof at all. With these remarks I come to the explanation of the parable. You will permit me to observe, in the outset, that too many are inclined to be captious, and to seek out some visionary explanation of all and every minute circumstance that may be introduced. The truth is, that a parable is always introduced to illustrate and enforce some one great lesson, and if the analogy holds good in the main features, it is all that can be expected. A want of attention to this principle has led many into erroneous and fanciful explanations of the parables. Thus, for example, the one great truth presented in the parable of the prodigal son, is, that God is ever ready to receive and bless the repentant sinner. But men, in their

folly, have gone on to give a mystical interpretation to the "husks," and the "swine," and the "ring," and the "shoes," and the "fatted calf," that are incidentally introduced; and thus, while a gaping multitude have wondered at the ingenuity of the preacher, they have overlooked the great principle of truth, for whose illustration alone the parable was designed. Do not, I pray you my hearers, expect me to pursue this course in relation to the text. While I endeavor to give you an explanation of the principal persons and incidents introduced, I shall endeavor to keep your eyes steadily fixed upon the great truth they are designed to illustrate.

Let it be observed, then, that the Savior was treating of the end of the law, and the introduction of the gospel, and reproving the Jews for their neglect of the privileges of the law, which ought to be what the apostle called it, "a school master to bring them to Christ." The pharisees who, the historian says, were covetous, heard of these things, and they derided him. But he went on to illustrate his subject. "The law and the prophets were until John;" figuratively speaking the Jews were married unto the law, and hence if they had put away the law before John, they would have been guilty of adultery in the sense of the man who should put away his wife. But the same God who had ordained that the law should continue until John, had also determined that then it should cease.

Hence if after that they adhered to the law, they were guilty of adultery, in the sense of the man who should marry her that had been put away. He then introduces the parable of the rich man, in which the rich and covetous pharisees who had derided him, were severely rebuked for their dependance upon riches, and the obstinacy of their unbelief in rejecting him in the face of the wonderful works that he wrought. This is the whole intent of the parable, and all its incidents, and the "dramatis personae" introduced, are founded upon the opinions of the pharisees themselves; and are intended to teach, not that these opinions are true, but to condemn them out of their own mouths, and show them that on their own ground, notwithstanding all their riches, instead of being the people of God they were resting upon a sandy foundation, and the poor and despised ones should go into the kingdom before them. To impress this lesson upon their minds he took a fable, with which they were most probably acquainted, not for the purpose of sanctioning that fable as divine truth, but because it embraced precisely the views of the pharisees, and its application could be seen.

The proud pharisee, who stood laughing in the arrogance of his wealth, at the humble Nazarene, could not fail of seeing himself mirrored forth in the first sentence of the parable, "There was a certain rich man." And as he goes on, and the story is brought to its "denoument," he could not fail of

feeling, that his own doctrines would condemn him, and that it were wise to reject these doctrines, and seek in truth and righteousness some better way.

And this was precisely the object that the Savior had in view. It was his custom to speak to the people in parables, and to reason with them upon their own grounds. When an opponent presented an objection, it was a rare thing that he denied or directly disputed the sentiment. But with a quickness of perception truly astonishing, he introduced some parable or illustration which would condemn the adversary out of his own mouth.

Such was the case when the scribes and pharisees murmured, because he received sinners and ate with them. Here you see, the objection was based upon the assumption that they were righteous. Well, he did not dispute, but admitted it, and justified himself on their own ground. "They that are whole (said he) need not a physician, but they that are sick." Thus it was in many instances; in fact, I might almost say it was his uniform and constant method of confuting his adversaries. In the parable of the householder, he makes the laborers confess that they had agreed for a penny a day; and reasons upon the assumption of the pharisees, that they had faithfully borne the burden and heat of the day. In the parable of the prodigal son, which precedes our text, he grants that the elder brother had served his father well and truly, and thus makes the self-righteous ones condemn

themselves, by the very admission of their opinions. Not that he intended, by any means, to teach the doctrines of these men, but to condemn them by the words of their own mouths.

Thus, my hearers, it is in the text. There was the Savior teaching the people that the end of the legal dispensation was at hand, and upbraiding them that they had not so improved the law as to be introduced into the light and liberty of the gospel. Around him were the mammon worshipping pharisees, glorying in their wealth and despising the poor, clinging to the law and rejecting the gospel, notwithstanding they saw it attested by signs and miracles before their eyes. They believed that in "hades," or hell, as it is translated in the text, there were two apartments: one for the righteous, and one for the wicked, and made no doubt that they should dwell with Abraham in bliss; while the poor and the despised, the publicans and the sinners, would be cast out and made to dwell in torments. Our Savior fitted his discourse to his hearers: founded his parable precisely upon their views, and in the end taught them, that by their own showing, instead of being above others, they were worse than those they despised. And when he came out with the great sentiment of the whole, at the close of the parable, "If they believe not Moses and the prophets neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," there was power in it to make them feel as David felt when

Nathan said unto him, "Thou art the man." The whole meaning, drift and pith of the parable, then, is this: To rebuke the pharisees, and condemn them out of their own mouths, for their covetousness, and confidence in riches, and for their obstinate adherence to the law, and stubborn unbelief in the Savior. It is enough, therefore, to say, in explanation of the parable, that the rich man was taken as a figure of the pharisees, and the beggar of those they despised, particularly, perhaps, those that believed in Christ. And, if you ask what is meant by the great gulf, and the flame, and the five brethren, and the angels, and other things of the sort? I answer, just as much as is meant by the swine and the husks, and the ring and shoes, and the best robe, and the fatted calf, in the parable of the Prodigal Son. They are merely the filling up of the parable, designed to give point and force to its great lesson, but were never intended to have a separate and distinct explanation.

True, I might go on and give you an explanation of all the persons and incidents introduced, and it might please the fancy, and it might not be a perversion of the text. But, after all, we should remember, that all these parables were drawn out by some special circumstances, and have their original application to them, and to them alone.

I have no objections to apply, then, by way of accommodation, to any events to which they will properly apply. The rich man, on a broader scale,

may represent the Jews, who were rich in treasures that God had given them; for "to them pertained the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the law."

The poor beggar, full of sores, may represent the Gentiles, who were poor in spiritual things, and of whom it was said, "the whole head is sick; from the crown of the head to the soul of the foot, there is no soundness in them; but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores." The death of the beggar may represent the release of the Gentiles from their idolatrous worship, and his being carried by the angels or messengers, into the bosom of Abraham, may set forth the introduction of the Gentiles by the apostles and messengers of God into the gospel, the faith of Abraham, The death of the rich man may represent the death of the Jews to the law, as the apostle says, "I was alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." His being in hades, may represent the present state of the Jews, in which it may be said almost without a figure, that they are, and have been, for eighteen hundred years, "standing and seeing Abraham afar off," and the Gentiles in the bosom of that faith in which Abraham rejoiced.

The great gulf may represent that broad and deep line of demarkation which separates the Jews from the Gentiles, which none can pass over; and the five brethren may represent that part of Israel

that had been broken off by unbelief, and who had Moses and the prophets, but would not believe.

Such is the substance of an explanation to this parable, which has been given to it by many learned men, and even some believers in the doctrine of endless misery; and so far as I know, it is usually adopted by Universalists. I have myself frequently given that explanation, believing it to be correct.

But, after mature reflection, and a careful and oft repeated examination of the parable, and the circumstances that called it forth, I am well satisfied, that like nearly all the parables of Christ, it was drawn out by circumstances and events then present, and found its original application and meaning in those circumstances. I am satisfied, too, that the system of carrying out a spiritual application of all the details of a parable, is calculated to lead the mind away from the great truth they would teach, and is therefore pernicious.

At the same time, I am willing to grant, that this and many other parables, may be explained or rather applied in detail, and thus serve as illustrations of other truths. But this is not their original meaning. The truth is, and I repeat it again, the parables are designed to illustrate some one great truth, and when you have found that truth, no matter for the drapery that surrounds it, you have found all that it means. That truth, however, is a general principle and may be applied in every age.

The great principle set forth in the text is, that riches and self-righteousness are but poor foundations of hope, and though it was set forth and applied particularly to the pharisees, yet, in all ages, it is truth, and should be treasured up in the heart.

I must say before I close, that, whether I have correctly explained the parable or not, can make no difference so far as the argument for endless misery is concerned. Give it a perfectly literal construction, and it affords no possible evidence of that doctrine. With such a construction, it may indeed present a man suffering in another world, but in regard to the duration of that suffering, it utters no word, drops no hint from which we are at liberty to presume that it shall be endless. I have as good a right to assume, that it will end in ten years, as any other man has to affirm that it will never end.

The great points I desire you to carry along with you, are: First, I have proved the text to be a parable. Second, as a parable, it teaches one, and but one great truth. That great truth is not endless misery, but a reproof of the pharisees, for their unbelief, and their trust in and love of wealth.

I leave the subject with you, and may the spirit of wisdom guide you into all truth.

SERMON XI.

WORSHIP OF THE BEAST.

"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." Revelation xiv, 11.

The book of Revelation, has been the subject of much controversy in the christian church. The points of dispute have embraced, not only the meaning of certain passages in the book, but the genuineness and authenticity of the book itself. When, where, and by whom was it written, are questions upon which much time and talent have been employed. While some have maintained, that it was written as it would purport to have been, by John, usually called the revelator, on the Isle of Patmos, and at a period not long previous to the overthrow of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem, others have denied that it was written by this author, and placed it among the forgeries of the second and third centuries. But the difficulty ends not here. Those who have agreed, that the work is genuine and authentic, have been sadly at variance when they have attempted an exegesis of the book itself. Some have carried forward its application mostly, to the untried scenes of a future and immortal state of existence, and contended that there only would have its fulfilment. Others have

confined its application, mostly to the present world, and have traced as they thought, very clearly the features of its "*Dramitis Personae*," in the history of the Roman church, and the great powers with which it has been connected. Some few of this class, have come to the conclusion, that the winding up of this great drama, is now near at hand and the fulfillment of its most important prophecies is now at the door. Others again, have confined the application of this book to the time that preceded, embraced and immediately followed the siege, destruction, and final overthrow of the city of Jerusalem, and the scattering of the power of God's ancient people the Jews.

I have no desire to enter the list of controversy upon these subjects, for I think I may say, that all the labor, and learning, which have been employed upon this subject, have left it where it was found, involved in darkness and much mystery. To me, I confess much of it is like the book, in the hand of him that sat upon the throne, "*sealed with seven seals;*" and though like the author, I "may weep much, that no man is found able to open the book, or loose the seals thereof," yet, like him I must wait until the power of the lion of the tribe of Judah shall break the seals, and unfold the mystery it contains. I simply observe however, that my own opinion is, it was written by John whose name it bears, that its date was previous to the destruction of Jerusalem, and its general scope was to warn

the people, particularly the christians of that city, of the impending desolation. It appears to me, however that whatever may be said of the author, date, or meaning of some parts of this book, its intrinsic excellency is such, as to commend it to the study of all who love and would practice virtue. It contains some of the most exalted and God-like sentiments ever taught on earth, some of the most sublime and beautiful specimens of composition, the annals of any age can afford, and some of the best moral instruction ever invented or propagated on earth. I believe that no man, who desires to know truth and practice virtue, can sit down to a perusal of this book, without reaping advantage from his labor. If he be solid and thoughtful, he will rise from it with more noble conceptions of God, a more feeling sense of the beauty and lovliness of virtue, and a more deep conviction of the odious nature, and miserable consequences of every form and kind of inipuity. Thus he will find his faith strengthened and heart improved. Such being my opinion of the book itself, I do not feel disposed to enter upon a long discussion of its date and origin, especially as these are topics which have been long agitated, and by wiser heads than mine, without coming to any clear and perfectly satisfactory conclusion. If it is valuable, then let us hold it fast, and treasure it up, in good and honest hearts, and endeavor to profit by its instructions. Such appears to me to be the part of wisdom.

The text I have selected, is doubtless highly figurative, but it will be seen in the sequel, that it contains a beautiful, and salutary lesson of instruction. I shall therefore pay as little attention as possible to the figure employed, and come directly, as I am able to consider the reality presented under the figure. A decent respect for the opinions of others however, will render it proper in the outset for me to show wherein I differ from the common opinion in regard to the proper exposition of the text, and to set forth the reasons which seem to justify that difference.

The common and so far as I know the uniform opinion, among the popular Theologians of the day, is that this text contains a faint description, perhaps literal, or perhaps somewhat figurative of the torments of those miserable beings, who are consigned by the decree of heaven, or by their own agency to a miserable and endless hell of fire and torment, in another world. It is regarded as a kind of lifting of the veil, that hides time from eternity, affording a glance at that world of torment, reserved for man, in the future and immortal state, where God has prepared

> "Eternal plagues and heavy chains
> Tormenting racks and fiery coals,
> And darts to inflict immortal pains
> Dip'd in the blood of damned souls."

There it is thought, "the smoke of their torment shall ascend up forever and ever," and "they shall have no rest day nor night who worship the beast

and his image and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." An opinion so general as this, and fraught with consequences of such infinite moment, ought not to be passed in silence, and I therefore beg your attention, while I give it an examination, and attempt to show that it receives no countenance from the text. I remark

1. The time when the smoke of their torment shall ascend up and they shall have no rest, is simultaneous with the worship of the beast.

The text saith, not that the smoke of their torment *shall* ascend up in another world, who worship the beast and his image *in this* state of existence, but the language is, "they have no rest day nor night *who worship* the beast and his image, and whosoever *receiveth* the mark of his name." It is agreed on all hands, I believe that the worship of the beast is established in this world, and the text makes it certain that the torment is suffered, while worship of the beast is in progress. It therefore belongs to those who assert, that men are to be tormented in another world, for having worshiped the beast in this, to prove it from some other source, for the text evidently gives no countenance to such an idea. It would be something new in the Theological world to be informed that men are to worship any thing in hell. The general report, of those who profess to know most about the infernal regions is, that men there, are engaged in wailings, curses and blasphemies, rather than in worshiping

anything, even the beast and his image. At all events, the text gives no countenance to the idea, that those of whose sufferings it speaks are terminated, for having worshiped the beast at a previous period, or at any time except while engaged in the worship. It cannot therefore allude to a punishment in another world, for the sins of the present.

2. It is evident, that the text refers to a period where time is divided into days and nights. Its language is, "they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." How can this properly be applied to a period subsequent to that time when the angel shall stand with one foot upon the sea, and the other upon the sand, and swear that time shall be no more? I have yet to learn, that there are days and nights in eternity, or in a future hell. But the text alludes to days and nights, and hence I conclude that it has its fulfillment in time, not in eternity.

3. The common view of the text, is opposed to the whole tenor of the book from which it is selected. The very title of the book, gives us to understand, that the things there written, were at the time of its writing, near at hand. It begins thus: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which he sent and signified by his angel, unto his servant John, *concerning things which must shortly come to pass.*" Thus, at the very threshold of the book, the reader finds a caution which should put him on

his guard, against carrying forward its application to events yet far in the bosom of futurity. So also in the body of the book, you find it repeatedly and emphatically asserted. "The time is at hand, and these things must shortly come to pass." And finally the book ends as it begins, with the oft repeated declaration, "the time is at hand, and behold I come quickly." It really appears to me that the writer of this book, ought to be allowed to know, to what period of time he alluded, and when he so repeatedly affirms, "The time is at hand, and these things must shortly come to pass." I cannot for the life of me, see the propriety of contradicting him, and carrying forward our explanations to things which are even now, far in the dim distance of the future. It was a besetting sin, for which the children of Isreal in ancient times, were more than once rebuked, that they "put far away the evil day," and said of their prophets. "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the things that are far off." Hence the Revelator, as if on purpose to prevent the possibility of such a mistake, repeats emphatically, as I find by examination not less than nine times the assertion, "the time is at hand," "these things must shortly come to pass" and "behold I come quickly." And after all in the face of these solemn assertions, nearly the whole christian world, have fallen into the very error, he seems so solicitous, that they should avoid; and to this day are, saying

as the Jews said in olden time, "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are afar off." I cannot therefore avoid regarding that, as an extremely erroneous, if not an obstinately wicked perversion of the text, which refers it, to scenes far in the dim distance of an unseen and future world.

It will avail nothing in favor of this interpretation of the text, to say that the torments here named are to continue "*forever and ever*," for surely, according to the most strict construction of the text, they cannot continue longer than days and nights shall last. Besides it is well known to every scholar, that the phrase translated forever and ever, means no more than a long and indefinite period of time. And every man who has read his bible, even in english is aware, that the same phraseology is applied over and over again, to things that have long since come to an end, and belong exclusively to time.

Upon the mere force of this phrase therefore, no argument can be founded for its future application. Even the very deeds of your houses and lands are given to you "*forever*" and you might as well contend that you will hold them in eternity, because that phrase is used, as that the text refers to the future world for the same reason.

These remarks are deemed sufficient on this part of the subject, and I now come to inquire for the true meaning of the text.

In relation to the worship of the beast, various conjectures and speculations have been indulged. Perhaps the more general opinion, among Protestants is, that "the beast" is used as an emblem of the Pope, or the church of Rome. But from this the Catholic would of course dissent, and he would be of the opinion that all, dissenting from the faith and practice of the Mother Church are worshipers of the beast. Thus the Protestant will charge the Catholic with being a worshiper of the beast, and the Catholic will retort the charge upon the Protestant.

My opinion is, that there is more truth in what they both say, than many are apt to imagine. Not that there is any evidence, that the text has any original reference, either to the Catholic or Protestant church as such. But I intend to say, that there are men enough among both Protestants and Catholics, who may in a certain sense, be said to worship the beast. I know not indeed, nor do I care to know, what the Revelator meant precisely, by the beast. I know not to whom, particularly he referred as worshipers of the beast, nor do I believe that any man living, knows a fraction more about it than I do. All here is conjecture; and of this there has been an abundance all alike, ending in "vanity and vexation of spirit." In the days of the Revelator, when the people were familiar with this symbolical and allegorical mode of representation, and when all the circumstances were well

known, there might have been no difficulty in understanding it. But at this remote age, and with our habits of thought and words of speech and necessarily imperfect knowledge of the ancient days, it must remain in much darkness. I might indeed speculate even as others, but it would be mere speculation after all.

Some general ideas however we may obtain with tolerable accuracy, and this is all I shall venture to attempt. It is well known that the Jews, as well as the early Christians worshiped "one only living and true God," who was the creator and governor of all worlds and all beings. On the other hand, the Pagans, with whom they were surrounded, believed in and worshiped a multitude of gods, and carved out their idols, in a form which they thought indicative of their character. Some and perhaps many of these idols were in the form of beasts. Hence the worship of the beast, may allude to the service of some of these idols, at all events, the general idea, which would be suggested to a Jew or Christian, believes in one only God, by a worshipper of the beast, would be that of an idolater. If a man bowed down in adoration before an idol of any kind, he might in this sense be called a worshiper of the beast.

But idolatry is not confined alone by those who bow down before graven images. There were some in the days of the Apostles, who "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image

like unto corruptible man and four footed beasts and creeping things," and these were not less idolaters, than if they had entered in the temples of pagan worship and paid their devotions there.

When therefore the Revelator mentions those who worship the beast, which he saw in vision, though I know not to what particular set of men he alluded, yet I gather the general idea, that they were idolaters, either from the fact, that they worshipped at the shrine of idols, or ascribed to the God of all, a character of which a beast might be a fit representation or emblem.

With this view of the text, the great doctrinal truth set forth is, that there is no rest, day nor night to be found in any other, but an understanding worship of the true and living God; and the practical admonition is to beware of idolatry in every and all its forms.

That I am not beating the air, or endeavoring to enforce a doctrine which has no just application to the present state of the church, will be evident, from a moments reflection on things around you. That multitudes, *vast* and *untold* multitudes of the human family, are yet enveloped in all the darkness of pagan idolatry, and *literally* bowing down before images of beasts and creeping things, there can be no doubt; and that little of rest or peace is found in this worship, is equally certain. But the superficial observer will not so readily discover, what I hold to be equally true, that there are many in the

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bosom of the church, who "change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image," and ascribe to the Lord of all the disposition of beasts, thus placing themselves justly upon the category of idolaters.

The word rendered beast in the text, properly signifies a *wild beast* or a *beast of prey*. And what are the characteristics of the beasts of prey? The most prominent of these is their cruelty. They seize upon their prey with evident delight, and without the least appearance of anything like compassion. In vain may the helpless victim cry out in anguish; the beast will tear his flesh and feast upon his heart's blood, with every demonstration of satisfaction, and for the sole purpose of self gratification. Such is the nature of the beasts of prey. God has made them so and it is right that they should live. They are cruel; and can it be possible, that man who feeds upon the bounty of God, has ever ascribed to him a feeling so fiendish as this? Must I answer the question? Aye, for the creeds of men, cruel as the grave and insatiate as death, compel me. My mind reverts at once to that most unfortunate and miserable of all errors, the dogma of ceasless and unmitigated suffering in the world to come; that awful doctrine which those who believe cannot look in the face; which hangs as a dark and portentous cloud over the world, from whence red lightnings dart, and deep thunders roll, shaking the nerves of the bold, causing the

stout heart to quail and blasting the holiest joys of the earth. There we are taught to look up to God, the self-existent and supreme Ruler of creation's boundless extent, dwelling in the changeless extremity of his own all pervading presence, and swaying the sceptre of uncontrolled and undisputed dominion through all the vast domains of his power. Man stands upon the narrow isthmus of time's contracted span, the creature of God's creation, introduced into being without his own knowledge or consent, and fast travelling to the tomb. He lives for a few days and nights in alternate sunshine and storm, in tears and smiles, when the blast from the desert comes, and he is low in the dust. The dark curtain of the future rises, and all its secret recesses are laid open to our view, and oh! what a scene of horror rises before the terrified imagination! It is a deep, dark world of wo; and there are the multitudes of the lost, bound in adamantine chains forged by the arm omnipotent, the companions of foul fiends, and the subjects of pain intolerable and never ending. And while their cries and their doleful moans of anguish are borne upward to heaven, God's ear is deaf, and his mercy "clean gone forever;" and he looks down and laughs at their calamities and mocks their fears, while saints in light shout new and rapturous hosannas, as the wail of the prisoners comes up on the dark sulpherous vapor, that mingles with the incense from the altar of heaven, and they are like

Pollock's persecution, " well pleased to hear a deeper groan. "

Oh ! tell us why is this ? Is the arm of the Lord shortened that it cannot save ? Nay, one sunbeam, from the halo of his glory would pour the light of eternal day upon the drear prison of despair ! One fiat of his power would sunder the chains that bind the helpless victims, and bring out a song of rapturous thanksgiving from every tongue. But God *will not do it ;* but for his own glory, and without any regard for their good, he will forever perpetuate these untold torments. Now this is what I call cruelty. It may be thought a hard name, and if I knew another that meant precisely the same thing, and would fall less harshly upon the ear, I would use it. But I understand cruelty to be the wanton and unnecessary infliction of pain, and suffering, without having in view the good of the sufferer, but purely for self gratification. What good, let me ask is proposed to be accomplished by this endless suffering ? None, either to God or man, to angels, or even devils themselves.

Should the objector urge, that man by his own agency brings all this suffering upon himself; it will not alter the principle. The parent who kindles a fire for no good object, and permits his child to run into its flames, and then refuses to deliver him, having the power so to do, is no less cruel, than if he thrust the child in the fire, and bound him there with chains, that cannot be sunder-

ed. View the sentiment therefore, in whatever light you will, and it can originate in, and be sustained by nothing short of the most malignant and unpitying cruelty. It is a spirit of cruelty also, which finds no parallel in the most depraved of the human race. The savage of the wilderness will torture his helpless prisoner, and dance by the light of the fire that burns his body. But soon his cruelty is satisfied, and in some lingering spirit of mercy, he gives the fatal blow, that ends the agony of his victim. Even the beast of prey, despatches his victim at once and puts an end to his sufferings; but there is no such gleam of mercy to shine upon the darkness of that place of torment, said to be prepared for man by the Lord of all. He will not even *annihilate* his creatures, but will exert his power to hold them in existence, for the sole and only purpose of tormenting them, world without end. We may call it what we please, but its name is cruelty. And those that teach this sentiment, perhaps unwittingly, but yet positively do "change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image, like unto corruptible man, and four footed beasts and creeping things," and in this service, do worship the beast, and his image, and have received the mark of his name.

That those who worship such a God and feel the force of their sentiments, have no rest day nor night, will be evident from a moment's reflection upon the state of the world if not from our own experience.

In the first place, it is impossible for a man to be at rest concerning himself. He cannot know that he is elected, or that he has and will continue to perform all those acts, necessary to secure an escape from the indignation of his God. And so long as there is a doubt upon that question, there must be fear, which hath torment. But if we put the best possible construction upon the case, and say that a man has no fears for himself; even that, cannot give him rest. There are those around him, in whose welfare he feels an interest, and how can he rest while these are in danger? The mother sits by her fireside, and as the fire emits its cheerful blaze within, all is peaceful there. But without the storm is raging, and the bleak wind is blowing a fearful gale. Why heaves that mother's breast with anguish! And why steals the silent tear down her cheek, as the rain patters upon the casement, and the wind whistles and roars without. Alas! her darling is not there! The adventurous sailor boy, left his home so dear, and is out upon the boisterous billows of the mighty deep. And now the storm king is abroad, the wind blows bleak and furious, old ocean heaves her angry waves, and the dear boy is exposed to its fury. Will that mother rest that night? Nay, but its vigils of prayer will be kept for her child; each blast of the tempest will thrill through every nerve, and her pillow will be wet with her tears of anguish, shed o'er the dangers of her absent child. If such are the feelings

of the human heart, tell me I pray you, can that mother rest day or night, when she believes that not one alone, but all her offspring are sailing rapidly o'er life's boisterous ocean, and bound for the gulf of endless wo? Nay, as well might she rest, when she saw her child standing upon the burning crater of Etna or Vesuvius, and ready to fall, and rise no more.

The eloquent Saurin, thus closes a sermon in which he had labored to prove the doctrine of endless wo. "I sink, I sink, under the awful weight of my subject; and I declare, when I see my friends, my relations, the people of my charge, this whole congregation, when I think that I, that you, that we all are exposed to these torments; when I see in the luke-warmness of my devotions, in the languor of my love, in the levity of my resolutions and designs the least evidence, though it be only possible or presumptive of my future misery, yet I find in the thought a mortal poison, that diffuseth itself through every period of my existence, rendering society tiresome, nourishment insipid, pleasure disgustful, and life itself a cruel bitter. I cease to wonder, that the fear of hell hath made some melancholy, others mad; that it hath disposed some to expose themselves to a living martyrdom, by fleeing from all commerce with the rest of mankind, and others to suffer the most terrible and violent torments."

Such were the feelings of the preacher, and could

the people fare better? Nay, such is its effects upon every benevolent mind, that believes in its truth. And when we think how widely this sentiment is diffused abroad, and how keen is the anguish, of thousands at this moment; as we look upon the desolations it has caused, it needs scarcely a figure, to say in the language of the text "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

Let it be remembered that the doctrine of future torments originated in pagan lands, and that in some of its forms it enters into every system of idolatry under heaven, and it will require no great stretch of the imagination, to see that it is one essential and distinguishing mark of the beast.

How long this beast with more than seven heads and ten horns, shall be permitted to deceive and torment the nations God only knows. One thing is certain ultimately. "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall come and worship before him." Then the beast shall be smitten and die, and his worship shall cease. Meantime I call unto you with earnestness,

"Come away! come away, from the samiel's breath,
It bears on its pinions the arrows of death,
It will weave for your future a chaplet of care,
'Tis the whirl of the tempest, the Lord is not there.
Come away! for as well might ye stand on the verge,

Of Etna's red crater, unharmed by its surge,
As well might ye drain the fell dews that distil,
From the dark upas tree unattended with ill.
Come away ! to the beautiful gardens that lie,
All smiling and bright 'neath a soft vernal sky,
To the fair promised land where the waters of life,
Glide smoothly along unembittered with strife.
Peace dwells in her borders ! the penitent one,
Though crimsoned his hands with the deeds he has done,
May find a sure refuge from guilt and despair,
'Neath the banner of truth, for Jehovah is there."

SERMON XII.

DISCIPLINARY PUNISHMENT.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent. Rev. iii. 19.

These words were addressed by the spirit, through the revelator John, to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans. The term "angel," signifies a messenger or minister, and the introduction to the text would have been as properly translated, and much more easily understood as follows: "Unto the *Minister* of the church of the Laodiceans, write these things, saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness."

It would seem from the context, that there was a want of zeal and faithfulness on the part of this minister. He was lukewarm, and had said to himself, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." He is informed, however, that instead of being rich, he is "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

He is counselled to "buy gold tried in the fire, that he might be rich; and white raiment, that he might be clothed; and to anoint his eyes with eye-

salve, that he might see." And then comes the text: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent."

The attentive hearer will perceive that there are two parts into which our text is naturally divided.

1. God rebukes and chastens in love.

2. This fact should produce zeal and repentance.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent."

The doctrine of the benevolent intentions and disciplinary nature, of the rebukes and chastenings of God, is here most fully and clearly established. He chastens and rebukes the children of men, in a great variety of ways, and by a vast multiplicity of means and agents. Sometimes he speaks his monitions in the still small voice of conscience, that whispers to the soul within, and goads the sinner, in the silence of his secret musings, and makes him cry out as one of old, "thou scarest me with dreams and terrifiest me through visions."

Sometimes he gently chides in the sweet and winning accents of love and mercy, that breathe from his gospel, and tenderly call on the wanderer to return; and then again, he thunders in his law, and utters his voice "terrible as the sound of many waters," and denouncing his sore judgments upon the head of the ungodly.

Sometimes he reproves and rebukes our ingratitude, by the very multitude of his blessings, that surround us; and then again he comes out in judg-

ment against us, and we groan in spirit under the severity of our misfortunes and our afflictions. But in whatever form these rebukes and chastenings appear, and by whatever agent they may be administered, they come out from the love of God, and are the wise, necessary, gracious and salutary, ministrations of a Father's kindness. So the eye of christian faith must ever view them, and such they are declared to be, by "the amen, the faithful and true witness."

I know the world, has always judged differently and herein I perceive an evidence, that the gospel is not formed after the wisdom of this world. The heathen who grope their way in the darkness visable of nature, with no light from the star of Bethlehem or the sun of heaven, to illumine their pathway, are excusable for an error on this subject.—They have learned from nature that there is a power superior to an arm of flesh, and have recognized the existence of the divinity, but of the principles of his government, they are from the very necessity of their circumstances, profoundly ignorant.—When the dark storm frowns upon the face of the skies, or the driving and desolating tempest, sweeps over the plain—when the earthquake heaves the foundations of the mountains, and causes the everlasting hills to tremble, as a reed shaken by the wind—when gaunt famine stalks abroad hungry and poor, and pestilence, wan and pale walketh in darkness and wasteth at noon day, and ghastly death,

holds his carnival of human flesh and blood; then superstition cowers down afraid, and the affrighten-ed children, ascribe it all to the anger of their gods. They hear the rebuke, they feel the chastening rod, but they know that it is done in love, and howling in pain, they look up and see the heavens storming, and the earth reeling under the indignation of the gods.

It is natural that it should be so, and in the heath-en, I can pity and forgive. But surely the christian should know his Father better.

And if there is anything, that should cause deep regret, it is, that those who profess to be the fol-lowers of Christ, should have brought this principle of heathenism into the temple of the living God.— But so it is. And even in the christian church, the various afflictions, that befall men, and the calamities that came upon them, are attributed to the displeas-ure of God, and are pointed out, as clear *manifesta-tions* of the indignation of heaven.

A violent storm, a sudden death, the loss of a vessel, or the explosion of a steam boat, will be appealed to as an evidence of God's wrath, and the scriptures will be searched, and those passages which treat of punishment, will be noted, and strained to suit the purpose of convincing the world, that God is a being of wrath and vengeance.

This is all wrong. The world ought to know, that God is a *father* and an unchanging *friend*. No storms of passion, or feelings of vindictive re-

venge, can ever disturb the peaceful mind of the eternal. No clouds of anger, can ever cross his *radiant brow*, from which beams the sunshine of endless light and love. And whether he comes in mercy, or in judgment, and pours his undisguised blessings upon our heads or smiles in the equity of justice, he is a father still; and the good of his creatures, is the end, and the object to which his ways unvarying tend. "As many as he *loves* he *rebukes* and *chastens*.

There are various considerations, which go to show, that this view of the chastisements of the almighty, is reasonable as well as scriptural. The very nature of God is proof, that he punishes in love. The apostle says, that "*God is love.*" He is not merely lovely, but he is love itself, pure, unmingled and unadulterated *love*. He is, as Dr. Clarke well observes, an infinite fountain of benevolence and beneficence, and he hates no creature that he has made." He cannot hate for his nature is "*love.*" Now if the fountain is benevolence, the streams must be benevolence also, for the same fountain doth not send forth waters both *bitter* and *sweet*. To us indeed, those streams may appear in different aspects. Now they may sweetly murmur in the green and verdant valley; and *anon*, they may rush with impetuous power, down the rugged mountain sides, and accumulating as they roll, swell to a mighty torrent, that bears all before it.—*Now* those waters may drop like the rain, even the

small rain upon the tender herb; and distill like the soft dews upon the grass. And *soon* they may pour down in torrents, or descend as the threatening hail, but in all these forms and shapes they come from the same fountain; that fountain is love, and so are all the streams that spring from its infinite depths. God can no more punish in hatred, and for a bad purpose, than he can cease to be what he is, and ever has been; and it is as utterly impossible for him, as a being of infinite *love*, to do an act in the spirit of hatred, as it is for infinite wisdom, to act in the foolishness of folly.

The infinite God cannot lie, because he is a God of truth. He cannot err, because he is a God of wisdom; and by the same rule, he cannot hate, because he is a God of *love*. We say therefore, that the very nature of God, not only renders it reasonable to suppose, that all his chastisements are inflicted in infinite love, but it demonstrates the absolute impossibility of its being otherwise.

Look at the subject for a moment, in another light. Here is man, a feeble creature of the earth, a frail child of a day. He is deceived and beguiled, and he sins. But who does he injure by his sin? Does he injure the great God, or endanger the stability of his throne? Nay, for God is infinitely above being injured by our vices, as he is above being benefitted by our virtues. If we are righteous what give we to him? And if we are wicked, what do we to him? But when we sin we

injure ourselves. And now let us suppose that God does *not love* us, and what possible reason can we assign why he should *punish* us?

The truth is, there would be no reason left, except it were sheer vengeance, and that is a feeling, that cannot find a resting place in the bosom of infinite love. Again, then, we are driven to the conclusion, that God punishes his creatures in the spirit of a father's kindness, and sound reason will sanction the declaration of the text, which saith "as many as I love I rebuke and chasten."

Moreover, the scriptures elsewhere clearly assert the same principle, for on this point, if upon no other, God has given us "line upon line, and precept upon precept." "Whom the Lord loveth, them he also chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you, as unto children. My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of him, for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth even as the father, the son in whom he delighteth." "We verily had fathers in the flesh who chastened us for their pleasure, but he for our profit, that afterwards we may be partakers of his holiness. No chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, unto them that are exercised thereby."

These are among the clear and explicit testimo-

nies, that abound in the sacred volume, proving beyond all fair controversey, that God punishes men in the kindness and tenderness of his own love and mercy, and that his punishments, are mercifully intended to promote the best possible good of those upon whom they are inflicted. "As many as he loves he rebukes and chastens."

Such is, and such has been the principle of the divine government, for six thousand years past, and it is worthy of your serious attention to inquire, wether it is likely, that such a principle will ever change or be subverted by another and a different principle?

For myself I judge, that the principle is eternal, immutable, and if as some think, will be the case, man shall sin in the future world, God will punish him there, not in wrath and endless vengeance, but in the *same love*, and with the same merciful object that characterize his chastisements on earth. God changes not, and there is no greater folly than that which concedes the beneficence of the divine chastisements in *this world*, but crosses the line that divides time from eternity, only to transform God into a merciless tyrant, and makes his punishments there the malignant tortures of an insatiate *fiend*, whose appetite for human misery will be satiated with nothing short of the endless wretchedness or the *multitude* of the human race. Place such a sentiment along side of our text, and behold how low and grovelling it appears! On the one hand

you see infinite and impartial love in God, carrying out the gracious plans of his government, by such means as his wisdom sees to be best, and "from seeming evil still educing good. And better thence again and better still. In infinite progression." And on the other, you see inveterate hatred working evil and only evil, and that continually, and it is not difficult to determine which is the spirit of God. One remark more and I leave this part of my subject. If God chastens as many as he loves, then evidently he loves as many as he chastens, and you have but to inquire how many he rebukes and chastens, in order to decide how many he loves. So the apostle reasoned when he said, "if ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with *sons*, for what son is he, whom the father chasteneth not." "But if ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." Here you perceive the apostle appeals to the chastisements of God, as an evidence of his love, and the proof of our sonship, and argues, that without these chastisements, we could not prove that God regarded us and treated us as his children.

Now there is no one exempt from the chastisements of God. All men have sinned, and no man can sin and not feel the chastening rod of his father. For this reason, all are chastised; and hence we derive a scriptural and strong argument, that he dealeth with all men as his children, and loves them

all with an everlasting love. And when we look abroad and see, that the chastening rod falls upon every soul of man, we can also see that God is the loving father of all, and by these chastisements he is gradually, yet surely, training them up to higher degrees of moral excellence, and a more near and spiritual communion with himself.

The remarks already offered are deemed a sufficent defence and illustration of the position, that God punishes man in love, and for his improvement and good, and I proceed to show

2. That this view of punishment is alone salutary in its moral influence.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore and repent." Very different indeed is this conclusion from that, which men in our day are disposed to draw from the same sentiment.

The disciplinary nature of punishment, has long been pronounced a dangerous. demoralizing and licentious doctrine, alike destitute of all moral power, incentive to zeal, or motive to repentance. Even the Doctors of the church, will now start in astonishment, at the suggestion that God designs all his punishments for man's good and ask, if that be so, what is the use of repentance, and why should we preach, or pray, or manifest a zeal for God and his holy cause.

Nay, they affirm, that to preach such a doctrine is to remove all motive to repentance, and open wide the flood gates of iniquity. All this proves

how easy a thing it is for men to be mistaken, and how far the world has departed from the spirit and truth of the "amen, the faithful and true witness."

Pardon me if I invite your attention to the word *therefore* in the text. It is very important. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore for this reason, and repent.

You cannot fail of discovering, that the spirit of truth here urges the fact that God rebukes and chastens in love, not as an excuse for coldness indifference, and impenitence, but as the very reason why there should be manifested a warm and animated zeal, and a true and hearty repentance of all iniquity. I cannot avoid thinking, that the spirit that dictated this text, was as well acquainted with the nature of man and the proper motives to urge him to duty, as the wisest of the teachers in the modern church, and I must not be blamed if my agreement with the latter ceases, where ends their concord with the former,

Were men willing to settle disputes of this kind by a direct appeal to the Scriptures, I should have no need of saying another word in order to prove, that the punishment here presented is of all others most salutary, in its influence. But this is a subject upon which men are slow of hearing, and I must look a little at the reason of the thing.

I lay it down as a principle of truth, sanctioned alike by common sense and common observation, that there is a period at which the infliction of

punishment ceases to exercise a salutary influence. That period arrives at the very moment the sufferer feels that the punishment is greater than he deserves, or that it proceeds from feelings of malice, or revenge. The whole history of the world will bear me witness, that when laws have been most mild and the punishment most merciful, there they have been best obeyed. And on the other hand, where laws have been most stern and punishments most unmerciful, there they have been most ruthlessly trampled under foot.

When the punishment is severe, and the conviction rests upon the mind of the subject, that the lawgiver seeks his own aggrandizement and not the good of the people, the effect is, that the weak and the timid faint under the severity of the rod, and contract a morbid and sullen insensibility to all danger; and the stout in heart despise both the law, the lawgiver and his power, and bid stout defiance to all his efforts to produce obedience.

Shall I prove the truth of these positions by a case in point? You shall find it in the history of the Jews. When David was upon the throne, and swayed the sceptre of a mild government, which mingled richly mercy with judgment, and satisfied the people that he sought their own good; then were they obedient subjects of his kingdom; but when an Ahaz or a treacherous Joab ruled with an iron rod, then the people rioted in every kind and form of iniquity.

So it is in family government. Go into that family where the father rules with the rod, and you shall not find anything like tolerable family government. But go where the law of love is observed, and where the parents govern by the influence of kindness, and there you will find a willing and cheerful obedience. In all these instance you may see an absolute demonstration of the position, that punishment to be efficatious must be administered in love and kindness.

The same principle will apply to the divine government, and the views which men entertain of the punishments presented in religion. Let men view God as a tyrant, and believe that he will punish them in endless wrath, all for his own glory, and without regard for their own good; and the effect will be, that the timid will despair, and the stout hearted despise both God and his law.

There is an instance on record that meets the the point precisely. The Jews had grown grossly corrupt and dreadfully wicked. They had well nigh filled up the measure of their iniquity, and the apostle addresses them as follows. "Ye have forgotten the exhortation that speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, even as the father the son in whom he delighteth." I have quoted the passage once before in this discourse, for [illegible] wing that

God punishes upon purely parental principles, and seeks not his own but the good of man. I now quote it for another purpose; and what I wish you to observe is, the reason which the apostle gives for the apostacy and wickedness of the people. "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastenings of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of him." You perceive here, that the apostle attributes the corruption and sinfulness of the people, to the fact, that they had forgotten the exhortation that spoke to them as to children, and taught them that God punished them as children. Had they remembered that God was their father, and that he chastened them in love, they would have repented of their evil ways, and walked in wisdom's ways. But as they had forgotten, and viewing him as an austere and cruel Master, they had despised his chastening and fainted under his rebuke, and so [illegible] again him.

But let us look nearer at the subject. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore and repent." Zeal and repentance are the peculiar exercises of the heart, that cannot flow from the knowledge that God chastens in love. Who does not see that the view of God and his government, is alone calculated to produce a pure and wholesome zeal in the service of God? Go, look at the cringing slave, who is driven to the performance of his task with the lash; and is there

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any zeal there, in the service of the master? Servile obedience there may be, but pure zeal is not the offspring of such causes as these.

But look at the child who loves his father, and who so confides in his kindness as to know, that even when he uses the rod it is done in love, and then you will find an earnest desire to obey, and a cheerful, ever-active zeal in the service of the father. So in this case: the man who looks upon God as a cruel and hard master, may render an outward and constrained obedience to his commands; but he cannot be expected to manifest a willing and cheerful zeal in his service. But the man who looks up to God as his friend and father, and believes that all his chastenings are but the faithful rebukes of a friend: that man will render a willing obedience, and manifest a cheerful and hearty zeal for God.

So of repentance; it is a willing and heart-felt turning from sin, and ought never to be confounded with the forced and outward obedience of the slave. The man who steals and is detected, and punished with the rigor of the law, may be sorry that he stole; but his sorrow will proceed from his dread of punishment, and not from hatred of crime itself. But when a man feels that the punishment proceeds from the love of a friend, then he sees in the fact that he is punished the truth that sin itself is a deadly and bitter thing, from which his friend would save him, and he loathes the sin itself, and

turns from it with full purpose of heart. This is true repentance, and you can see, at a glance, that it can only proceed from that view of God which is presented in the text. Wrath may freeze the soul, and cause man to cower down afraid. It may even restrain and deter from out-breaking sin; but it can never touch the heart, and produce that godly sorrow and true repentance, which flows from a proper view of the guilt of sin, and the love of God shed abroad in the heart.

My brethren, let us learn a lesson of practical wisdom from our subject. Let us submit with cheerfulness to the government of God; and when we hear his rebukes and feel his chastisements, let us kiss the rod, and give dilligent heed to that exhortation which saith, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore and repent."

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